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Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Assessing Student Outcomes

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# Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Assessing Student Outcomes

**by**

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# Dedication

This work is dedicated to everyone who has loved, supported and believed in me over the years: my mother, Augustine; my father, William; my love, Priscilla; my siblings, Reba, Teresa, and James; and especially my ancestors, Nancy, Inez, J.C., Lizzie, and Rueben among them.

Also, to all the people who taught me by allowing me to serve them and forgiving my mistakes; my clients, my students, my co-workers.

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**Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Assessing Student Outcomes**

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The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the sole accrediting body for social work education at the baccalaureate and master's levels in the United States, articulates the competencies that social work students should achieve through the Educational Policy and Standards (EPAS). Educational Policy 2.1.4, "to engage diversity and difference in practice (CSWE, 2008)," serves as the primary standard related to students' achievement of the ability to work with diverse populations in a competent manner. This standard is operationalized by only four very broad and relatively abstract practice behaviors. Although cultural competence models are the primary framework used for designing curriculum to help students achieve the engaging difference and diversity competency, critiques about the utility of cultural competence models abound. There is also a lack of literature that analyzes the relationship of cultural competence and engaging diversity and difference in practice concepts. The lack of clear conceptualization creates difficulty with identifying and evaluating specific outcomes and developing social work education programming that effectively addresses the outcomes

desired. This dissertation presents an exploration of the construct, engaging diversity and difference in practice, through three articles describing two studies and a conceptual application of theory. The first article describes Critical Race Theory and uses the theory as an approach for a logic model of a social justice course that has utility for teaching students to engage diversity and difference in practice. The second article explored social work faculty's experience of student's achievement of engaging diversity and difference in practice. This article reports findings from a qualitative study that yielded themes that describe the demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice. The third article describes findings from a concept mapping study that examined engaging diversity and difference in practice from the perspectives of social work faculty and field instructors. Comparisons between faculty and field instructors' ratings of importance, ease of assessment and whether they adequately assess each element are reported. This dissertation addresses gaps in the literature and through the development of a conceptual framework moves toward the conceptualization and measurement of student outcomes in a key core competency.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

There are more than 689,000 social workers practicing in the United States (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Most of them were educated and trained in one of the approximately 700 accredited undergraduate social work programs or graduate master's programs of social work (Council on Social Work Education, 2013a). Yet, the social work profession has not assessed whether student outcomes are linked to practice competence or the overall effectiveness, efficiency, or quality of the social work education system (Bogo, 2012; Stoesz, Karger, & Carrilio, 2010). These unexamined facets of social work education have implications for the profession's legitimacy and its accountability to students, the institutions that employ social work professionals, and most importantly, to the millions of clients that social workers serve (Gambrill, 2001b).

Social Work education programs are continually challenged to prepare social work students for practice with diverse populations in an ever-changing socio-political environment. The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) governs higher education curriculum and practice at the bachelors and master's levels in social work education in the United States through establishing and ensuring compliance with the Educational Policy and Standards (EPAS). The EPAS sets the minimum requirements for U.S. colleges and universities to be accredited in social work education (CSWE, 2008). In essence, the EPAS establishes student outcomes as the primary measure of effective education programs and defines student outcomes as ten core competencies believed to be the threshold for professional social work competence. Jani, Ortiz, Pierce, and Sowbel (2011) assert that changes to EPAS over the years "inevitably and unintentionally made it subject to different interpretations and have created an understandable

level of confusion among social work educators" (p. 298). This confusion manifests in difficulty teaching and assessing student competency outcomes. In discussing accountability and measurable outcomes in social work education, Anastas (2010) states, "it is clear that more and better research on the effectiveness of our educational methods in a range of areas is needed" (p. 151).

In making a case for the advancement of education research as a field within social work, Bogo (2012) notes that there is a growing body of scholarship on social work education, yet, there is a need for studies that "engage with and extend our understanding of important conceptual issues and build on existing scholarship and empirical findings" (p. 404). She further states that social work needs academics who "locate their primary program of scholarship and research in social work pedagogy" (p. 404). More specifically, Holloway, Black, Hoffman, and Pierce (2009) indicate that there has never been a comprehensive analysis to assess the extent to which the requirements of the EPAS translate into the successful professional functioning of newly graduated social workers.

One important goal of social work education is to educate students to engage diversity and difference in practice (CSWE, 2008). CSWE Educational Policy 2.1.4 articulates this standard. This standard, however, is operationalized by only four very broad and relatively abstract practice behaviors: (1) Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power; (2) gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups; (3) recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences; and (4) view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they

work as informants. Additionally, although cultural competence models are the primary framework used for designing curriculum to help students achieve the engaging difference and diversity competency, critiques about the utility of cultural competence models for teaching diversity content in social work programs abound. There is also a lack of literature that analyzes the relationship of the cultural competence and engaging diversity and difference in practice constructs. Until there is more research identifying the elements of the demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice, it is, in fact, relatively impossible to evaluate the relationship of cultural competence and engaging diversity and difference in practice. Further, this lack of explication creates difficulty with identifying and evaluating specific outcomes and developing social work education programming that effectively achieves the desired outcomes.

**Problem Statement**

The above discussion points to a gap in the literature related to social work education that this dissertation seeks to address. The profession struggles to teach, operationalize and measure student outcomes related to specific EPAS. Of these, "to engage diversity and difference in practice" is of particular importance to ensuring that students are competent to practice social work with diverse populations (CSWE, 2008; NASW, 2008). The use of cultural competence models to design curriculum and teach students to engage diversity and difference in practice has numerous critiques. Alternative approaches to teaching this competency based on theories and models other than cultural competence are needed. Additionally, the lack of empirical data to support conceptualization and measurement of students engaging in diversity and difference in practice supports a need for more research to uncover the conceptual meaning and identify a conceptual framework that would provide a platform for further research.

This dissertation has three primary goals: (1) examine the conceptual utility of utilizing critical race theory as an approach for developing a social justice course for social work to teach student's to engage diversity and difference in practice, (2) explore social work faculty's experience of students' achievement of engaging diversity and difference in practice, and (3) to examine engage diversity and difference in practice from the perspective of faculty and field instructors and identify conceptual elements and a framework for understanding the construct.

This introductory chapter articulates gaps in the literature, provides an overview of the literature, identifies the research questions, and discusses the methodology used to answer those questions. Chapters two, three, and four are discrete articles, each addressing identified gaps in the social work education literature, reflected in the three aforementioned goals of the dissertation. The concluding chapter summarizes the major findings and linkages between the articles, limitations of the studies, and discusses implications for future research.

## Literature Review

This literature review covers key concepts important to this dissertation, including a discussion of social work education outcomes, field education as an important site of integration and production of student outcomes, and an overview of cultural competency as an outcome of interest. Field education is explored because it is the primary function of importance in the agency setting context and because CSWE has designated field education the "signature pedagogy" of social work. Cultural competency was selected because it is the model often used to teach students "to engage diversity and difference in practice," a key EPAS competency (CSWE, 2008 p. 4). Cultural competence has overall importance within social work education. Following the literature review, systems theory and critical race theory are described along with

their general utility for grounding social work education research design and conceptualization for assessing social work education outcomes. Systems theory and CRT provide the foundation for the research and conceptual articles included in this three article dissertation. Finally, the literature review includes brief overviews of the two methodologies, phenomenology and concept mapping, used for two of the three articles in this dissertation

## Social Work Education Outcomes

Interest in outcomes in social work education extends from the broader goal in higher education to assess student outcomes as a tool for improving educational quality and ensuring academic accountability (Anastas, 2010 p. 151; Kameoka & Lister, 1991 p. 251). Kuhlman (2009) offers a useful discussion of the "two-fold nature of the outcomes" of social work education. He writes,

> Social work educators are obligated to attest to the readiness for practice of each individual student graduated with a B.S.W. or M.S.W. degree. We are obligated to demonstrate that each educational program consistently "produces" B.S.W. and/or M.S.W. practitioners who are prepared to do what social workers are called on by our society to do. (p. 73)

This alludes to student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes are sometimes interchangeably referred to as professional socialization and institutional outcomes. All are related to whether a social work program effectively teaches what students should know to be ready to work.

**Professional socialization.** Professional socialization has been defined as the process of internalizing the values, interests, skills, knowledge and behavior that characterize a profession (Ryan, Fook, & Hawkins, 1995). The importance of professional socialization seems to be

generally agreed upon (Barretti, 2004a, Barretti, 2004b; Miller, 2010; Pardeck & McCallister, 1991). Professional socialization is often confounded with student learning outcomes because they are commonly thought to have the same components. Generally, professional socialization differs from student learning outcomes in that professional socialization is framed to include both the intended and unintended outcomes of social work education and begins before the formal education process and extends beyond (Baretti, 2004a; Miller, 2010), while the term student learning outcomes is restricted to student acquisition of intended outcomes during the educational process or intervention. Additionally, Baretti's (2004a) analysis of a review of the literature on professional socialization in social work contended that despite the common assumption by social work educators that social work education engages students in a process of professional socialization, social work has failed to document the impact of social work education in this regard.

Like research on student learning outcomes, social work professional socialization research continues to be sparse and under-developed (Barreti, 2004a; Miller, 2010; Weiss, Gal, & Cnaan, 2004). Weiss, Gal, and Cnaan (2004) assert that the literature is inconclusive about the role of social work education on the professional socialization process

**Student learning outcomes.** CSWE (198), as cited in Kameoka and Lister (1991), previously defined educational outcomes as:

> The anticipated or achieved results of programs…Indicators of achievement of educational outcomes may include, but are not limited to: student attitudes; knowledge and performance; the performance of students at the time of graduation; and the performance of graduates in practice and in subsequent educational programs. (p. 251)

Holloway (2009) asserts that with the introduction of revised standards in 2008 to replace educational program objectives with student practice competencies, CSWE has advanced issues of educational outcome assessment another step forward. He states that use of behavioral outcomes strengthens professional social work education.

The definition of outcomes as described by the CSWE matches nicely though incompletely with Kirkpatrick's (1967) model of student learning outcomes which Barr, Freeth, Hammick, Koppel, and Reeves (2000) elaborated on further and which Carpenter (2011) generalized for application to social work education. Table 1 outlines the four levels of educational outcomes Kirkpatrick described: (1) learners' reactions to the educational experience; (2) learning which is characterized as increased knowledge, skills, and attitudes; (3) behavioral change including the application of behavior to the work environment which effects change in organizational practice; and (4) benefits to clients. The first two levels are exclusively related to professional socialization, while level three straddles the areas of professional socialization and institutional outcomes, and level four falls exclusively in the institutional realm. Carpenter (2005) utilized the theoretically based general model of learning outcomes Kraiger, Ford, and Salas (1993) described, which elaborated on the level 2 of Kirkpatrick's model to specify cognitive, skill-based, and affective outcomes and to apply the model to social work education.

**Table 1. Levels of Outcomes of Educational Programs (Carpenter, 2001)**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Level I | Learners' Reactions | Participants; views of their learning experience and satisfaction with the training |
| Level 2a | Modification in Attitudes and Perceptions | Changes in attitudes or perceptions towards other professionals, service users and carers, their problems and needs, circumstances and care |
| Level 2b | Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills | The concepts, procedures and principles of working with service users and carers, and the acquisition of thinking/problem-solving, assessment and intervention skills |
| Level 3a | Changes in Behavior | The implementation of learning from an educational program into practice, prompted by modifications in attitudes or the application of newly acquired knowledge and skills |
| Level 3b | Changes in Organizational Practices | Wider changes in the organization/delivery of care, attributable to an educational program |
| Level 4 | Benefits to Users and Carers | Any improvements in the well-being and quality of life of people who are using services, and their carers, which may be attributable to an educational program |

In his article, which reviewed the outcomes, measures, and research designs in English language social work social work literature published between 2004 and 2010, Carpenter (2011) reported on 31 published studies of outcomes of social work education. Eleven of the studies were from the United States and more than half of these studies were specific to social work while the other half were related to inter-professional initiatives which involved social workers. Carpenter found that rigorous outcome evaluation of social work education is embryonic and that the few evaluations that have been published focus primarily on changes in knowledge and skills and or attitudes rather than behavior and/or the impact on service users. He also found that there

has been progress in the development and use of outcome measures but that there is still much to be done to test the reliability and validity of such measures. Additionally, Carpenter makes the case that social work education outcome research needs more diverse research designs because currently research is heavily dependent on pre-post-test designs. He found no studies involving controls and few comparative studies. The research design issue makes it difficult to establish that whatever change is noted can be attributed to the education intervention.

**Assessment.** To adequately assess outcomes, inquiry would be necessary within and between the policy, standards, and accreditation domains of CSWE, the practice domain of field education, and the implementation, curriculum and pedagogy domains of social work programs. More importantly, many of the findings suggest that what social work students learn in their programs is not necessarily what is intentionally taught but what faculty and field instructors model (Miller, 2010). Kameoka and Lister (1991) describe several potential problems and limitations of outcome assessment including the lack of standardized measurements, the inadequacy of evaluation of student achievement, difficulties related to the lack of resources necessary for assessment, and concerns about how results might be used. It is clear that there is much to be done in conceptualizing and utilizing outcomes for the purpose of evaluating the quality of social work education (Anastas, 2010, p. 259).

## Field Education

The field practicum has been characterized as the site of integration of theory and practice. Bogo (2010) asserts that from the earliest days of social work education, educators have recognized the importance of providing field-based learning experiences. Bogo, Raskin, and Wayne (2010) cite several sources to make the point that early field education was based on

the belief that through apprenticeships, supervised by expert practitioners, students could learn to practice social work. They also indicate that the theoretical underpinnings of field education include contributions from Kolb's model of experiential learning and adult learning theory. These theories emphasize that students learn by gaining experience that provides both an opportunity to perform a service and to study or assess their practice using subjective reflection and conceptualizing linkages to theory.

**Signature pedagogy.** Field instruction has been recognized as a distinct branch of social work practice (Bogo & Vayda, 1998; Caspi & Reid, 2012, p. 36), and CSWE has identified field instruction as the signature pedagogy of social work. Lee Shulman (2005) introduced the term signature pedagogy to describe a characteristic form of teaching and learning for a particular profession. He noted that the signature pedagogy is the form of instruction that stands out when one thinks about the preparation of members of a particular profession. CSWE (2008) defines signature pedagogy as "a central form of instruction and learning to socialize students to perform the role of practitioner--it contains pedagogical norms with which to connect and integrate theory and practice" (p. 8). Shulman (2005) identified three dimensions of a signature pedagogy: (1) surface structure, which is the "concrete, operational acts of teaching and learning, of showing and demonstrating, of questioning and answering, of interacting and withholding, of approaching and withdrawing"; (2) deep structure which is "a set of assumptions about how best to impart a certain body of knowledge and know-how"; and (3) implicit structure, which is "a moral dimension that comprises a set of beliefs about professional attitudes, values and dispositions. Signature pedagogies "prefigure the cultures of professional work and provide the early socialization into the practices and values of a field" (Shulman, 2005, p. 54).

## Field Education Critiques and Concerns

There is much written in critique of field education. Though structural and process concerns are reflected in some of the critiques, some of the most persistent and pervasive critiques concern the idea of field education as the signature pedagogy. Bogo (2010) indicated that social work field education doesn't match Shulman's (2005) criteria for signature pedagogy because the application of field instruction is inconsistent and it does not include structural student-to-student accountability. Holden, Barker, Rosenberg, Kuppens, and Ferrell's (2011) attempt to conduct a meta-analysis to answer questions about the overall effects of field placements, yielded no studies that met their very stringent inclusion criteria causing them to conclude that the claim of field education as social work's signature pedagogy lacks credibility due to the lack of empirical research. These findings highlight the need for continued research and conceptualization of field education.

**Structure Concerns.** The need to integrate field and classroom learning across two distinctive sites creates marked difficulty. Bogo (2012) describes the division of sites, focus, and teachers into either classroom or field setting as the primary challenges related to how social work education is structured. She expressed a concern that the structure of field education may create an incongruence between "the material taught in academic courses and in the field setting" (p. 18). Concerns about incongruence are also reflected related to processes of field education.

**Process Concerns.** Field education processes are plagued by dilemmas caused by the difference in purposes, values, and processes of the school and field setting (Bogo, 2010, p. 29-30). These conflicts are in part caused by the different and perhaps conflicting frames of reference, differences in purpose and mission, in what constitutes valued activities, time

perspectives, focus, rewarded behaviors, approach to social work, and method of governance. Caspi and Reid (2012), concerned with the status of process models for social work field education wrote:

> An extensive review of social work field education literature demonstrates a marked lack of coherent models that provide instructors and students with discrete procedures for field instruction. What does exist are program designs and approaches that emphasize different modes of learning that are developed largely without a guiding conceptual framework and tested theory. In addition, principles are frequently put forth regarding what should occur between the field instructor and the student to optimize learning; however, there is little that guides the interactive dimensions of the field instructor-student relationship toward achievement of learning goals. In short, social work field education has been working without a well-articulated model that informs the process of field instruction. Indeed, the need for field instruction designs that are effective and provide supervisors with direction and confidence has been repeatedly voiced. (p. 37)

**Lack of Empirical Research.** Similar to Holden et al. (2011) and Bogo's (2010) assertions related to field education as the signature pedagogy of social work, Caspi and Reid (2012) noted that "Field instruction largely goes on behind closed doors. Little research has been done to uncover what occurs behind those doors. Indeed, not much is known about what works and what does not in field instruction or about which behaviors are most successful in achieving objectives of professional competence and identity" (p. 36). This lack of research is perhaps partially related to the inertia that Shulman (2005) described as a characteristic of a signature pedagogy. Perhaps the benefits of social work education are taken for granted, thus inhibiting critical,

probing research related to its effectiveness. In particular, Bogo (2010) asserts that there is a dearth of studies on the impact of structural factors on field learning, and she calls for studies of classroom teaching and learning processes in addition to more rigorous studies on field education.

Regardless of concerns about whether field education meets the criteria of a signature pedagogy it is an important component of social work education. Field education is an important site of production of student outcomes including engaging diversity and difference in practice. Field education has multiple complexities related to conceptualization of approaches, models, dimensions, and structures. Also field education requires the involvement of multiple systems component's with differing and sometimes conflicting goals. Consequently, it is important to ground field education structures and processes in empirical research.

**Cultural Competence**

Social work education is required to prepare social work students to practice in multiple settings, with diverse populations, and at multiple levels of practice. The nature of social work requires engagement with and among people, groups, and communities who are at the crossroads of oppressions and lack of privilege. CSWE requires social work programs to prepare students to work in settings and with populations with which they may have had little previous experience or with whom they share few characteristics. One of the primary ways social work education programs have attempted to do this is by utilizing a cultural competency (also called cultural sensitivity and multi-cultural) model. This has held some success, particularly in expanding student's knowledge and placing skills tools in their proverbial toolboxes (Potocky, 1997; Rothman, 2008; Schiele, 2007; Spencer, Lewis, & Gutiérrez, 2000). Cultural competence has

relevancy to the system of social work education in numerous ways. Perhaps, the most important is the consideration of cultural competence related to student's acquisition for practice because of the broad impact on clients and systems that social workers impact (NASW, 2007).

Historically, culturally competent practice in social work has been most often conceptualized related to attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Van Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004). NASW (2007) operationally defined cultural competency as "the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes" (p. 12). This definition includes both individual and systems dimensions. CSWE's (2008), definition of cultural competence as professionals' ability to function successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds is more narrow in scope and includes only an individual dimension.

**Teaching cultural competence**. The origins and development of the cultural competence model and its role in social work ideology, practice, and pedagogy are prevalent in social work literature (e.g., Potocky, 1997; Rothman, 2008; Schiele, 2007; Spencer, Lewis, & Gutiérrez, 2000). Much of the research and scholarly writing concerning acquisition of cultural competence skills has been related to particular teaching techniques, including storytelling (Carter-Black, 2007; Senehi et al., 2009), dialogic learning (Rozas, 2007), structured controversy (Steiner, Brzuzy, Gerdes, & Hurdle, 2003), and instructional technology (Lee & Bertera, 2007) among other methods. There is also much written about models and frameworks for teaching cultural competency or diversity (Abrams & Gibson, 2007; Adams, 2007; Marshack, Hendricks, & Gladstein, 1994; Ortiz & Jani, 2010), and it is not difficult to find curriculum and manuals for

teaching diversity (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Armour, Bain, & Rubio, 2007; Moore, Madison-Colmore, & Collins, 2005; Spears, 2004).

In their article about the historical and theoretical development of cultural competence in social work, Kohli, Huber, and Faul (2010) provide a synthesis of current frameworks being used for understanding cultural competence and assert that the Anderson and Carter (2003) cultural framework matches with the development of cultural competence in the social work literature. The ethno-cultural framework includes 10 different frameworks that Kohli, et al. extrapolated from the social work literature. These 10 frameworks have contributed to the development of cultural competence in social work (see Table 2). This framework as depicted in Figure 1 includes what Kohli et al. depict as the core ideas of all the different manifestations of cultural competence frameworks in the social work literature. The core ideas include three major perspectives 1) ethno-cultural diversity, 2) oppression, and c) vulnerable life situations.

**Table 2. Approaches to the Development of Cultural Competence in the Social Work Profession**

| Approach | Proponents | Major contributions |
|---|---|---|
| Social constructionist approach | George & Tsang (1999)<br><br>Lee & Greene (1999) | Emphasis is on social construction of diversity and difference. Intersectionality of oppressions is discussed with respect to multiple identities and the nonhierarchical nature of oppression.<br><br>It is not possible to be experts on all diversity-related issues due to considerable intergroup diversity. This framework is based on the premise that people actively create and recreate their realities. Differences in views should be accepted and cultural sensitivity toward different worldviews is the key point. |

Table 2 (continued)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Humanistic approaches . | Cross-cultural approach (Goldstein, 1987) | A model of cognitive humanism that emphasizes not fixating on either/or approaches, but focusing on the ethical and humanistic dimensions when counseling clients from diverse backgrounds. |
| | Existential cross-cultural approach (K. V. Harper & Lantz, 1996) | Enlightened view of human diversity that is grounded in cross-cultural social work practice. Emphasis is on accepting and respecting human differences and similarities. |
| | Culturally transferable core (Taylor, 1999) | Social work shares some fundamental responsibilities, tasks, and principles, and thus has elements that can constitute a culturally transferable core internationally. |
| | Human-centric approach (Webster, 2002) | Instead of making people realize that they belong to specific groups, effort should be made for people to see their innate similarities and celebrate their differences |
| Strengths approach | Saleebey (2006) | Based on Saleebey's ideas, an effort is made to mobilize the creative will of individuals as it produces the strength necessary for growth. It enables the clients to use resources and become empowered. The focus is on the strengths of clients rather than problems. Belief that positive perception of self-worth in the clinician is created through:<br>1. Recognition<br>2. Connection<br>3. Analysis<br>4. Knowledge and skills<br>5. Reflection and collaboration |
| Empowerment approach | Guadalupe (1999) | Based on the ideas of Freire (2000) and Giroux (1992). Basic premises are:<br>1. Promotion of well-being<br>2. Multiple dimensions of life<br>3. Consciousness raising<br>4. Many ways of doing things<br>5. Trust |

Table 2 (continued)

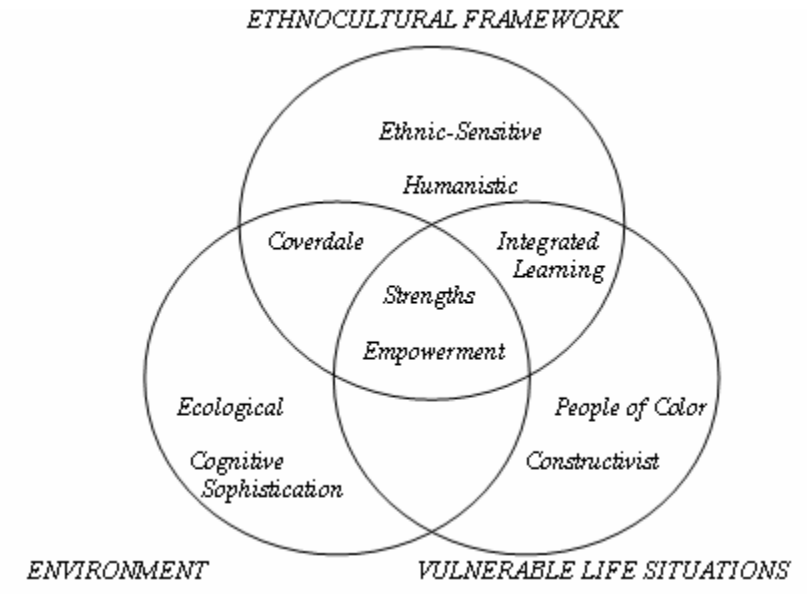
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Ethnic-sensitivity Approach | Devore & Schlesinger (1999) | One's individual and collective history has an impact on understanding psychosocial problems. Social workers try to simultaneously focus their attention on the individual and systemic concerns as they emerge. Seven layers of understanding are proposed to understand problems from a holistic perspective |
| Person-in-environment/ Ecological approach | Haynes & Singh (1992); Sowers-Hoag & Sandau-Beckler (1996) | Problems faced by clients are assessed in relation to their historical, environmental, cultural, familial, and individual levels.<br>Interactions of individuals with their environments occur at all of these levels and any disruption results in stress. The emphasis is on educating social work students toward differences in the different ethnic/social groups. The ecological approach looks at the individual, familial, community, national, and global issues when finding solutions to problems. These theories are based on the values of justice, independence and freedom, and the importance of community life, client self-determination, and social change. |
| People of color approach | Lum (2000) | This is a process stage approach based on generalist practice. Four areas of competence:<br>1. Personal and professional awareness of ethnicity by practitioners<br>2. Knowledge of culturally diverse practice<br>3. Skill development in work with culturally diverse clients<br>4. Inductive learning |
| Cognitive sophistication approach | Latting (1990) | This perspective involves identification of "isms," acknowledgment of own biases, and development of critical thinking skills when examining one's own and others' biases. The "isms" are social arrangements that create problems. Both intergroup contact and development of critical thinking skills have potential to uncover biases of students.<br>Functions of bias:<br>1. Socialization<br>2. Psychological<br>3. Cognitive social psychological<br>4. Politico-economic |

Table 2 (continued)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Coverdale approach | Plionis & Lewis (1995) | Borrowed from management consulting, it promotes individual, interpersonal, and intragroup tolerance toward inherent differences within people. |
| Integrated cognitive and affective learning approach | Torres & Jones (1997) | It encourages students to address the significance of their racial, ethnic, and cultural heritage and emphasizes the effects of this education and enrichment on developing ethnic-sensitive social workers. The focus is on the awareness and knowledge skill components of developing cultural competence.<br><br>There are challenges in using this approach as it could include instructing a homogeneous group, the constraints of a single course, and a lack of systematic evaluation of the impact of a single course on students' personal lives and professional growth. |

*Source: Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010*

**Figure 1. Social Work Frameworks for Understanding Cultural Competence**




*Source: Kohli, Huber, & Faul, 2010 adapted from Anderson & Carter, 2003.*

**Cultural competency standards.** The mission of the National Association of Social Worker (NASW) is to "enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies" (NASW, 2013). NASW has tremendous influence on the profession of social work in that it is the largest professional membership association of social workers in the world. NASW (2001, p. 11) defines cultural competency as "the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. In 2001, NASW's Board of Directors approved S*tandards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (NASW, 2001). When paired with *Indicators for the Achievement of the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice [Indicators Manual]* (NASW, 2007, p. 4), the standards provide "guidance on the implementation and realization of culturally competent practice" through an overview of ten standards for cultural competence practice, definitions of cultural competence concepts, and an interpretation and indicators for each standard.

The *Indicators Manual* (NASW, 2007) offers definitions of cultural competence that include individual and systems features. Three of the ten standards (Standards 7, 9, 10) relate directly to meso or macro practice considerations. The *Indicators Manual* describes five essential elements: (1) valuing diversity, (2) having capacity for cultural self-assessment, (3) consciousness of the dynamics when cultures interact, (4) institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) develop programs that reflect an understanding of diversity that reflect a system's ability to become more culturally competent. Each of the five essential elements should be manifest in

each level of service delivery in attitudes, structures, policies and services. NASW's (2001) standards describe the achievement of cultural competence as a life-long process for social workers that begins with cultural awareness and grows toward cultural sensitivity before achieving cultural competence.

The CSWE EPAS contains two standards that directly relate to student acquisition of cultural competency (CSWE, 2008). Educational Policy 2.1.4-Engage diversity and difference in practice articulates the individual knowledge, attitudes, and awareness that students should achieve while acknowledging that there is a process of cultural competency. Educational Policy 2.1.5 Advance human rights and social and economic justice, also articulates aspects of macro practices related to understanding, advocating, and engaging in practice related to institutional cultural competence.

**Assessment.** CSWE requires each accredited social work program to engage in assessment, but there is no uniform or standard forms or methods of assessing whether social work students, faculty, or programs' have achieved cultural competence. This results in a lack of data about cultural competence in the U.S. system of social work education Jani, Ortiz, Pierce, and Sowbell (2011, p. 297) identified the assessment dilemma in this way, "Social work educators are faced with two seemingly contradictory sets of demands...a desire to respond to changing practice and educational approaches to diversity and difference, rooted in a postmodern perspective, and a need to demonstrate the attainment of measurable educational outcomes, which has traditionally been interpreted through a positivist lens." These contradictory demands often tip in favor of the positivist approach as the accountability structure of social work

education is rooted in this approach even though it may not meet the need for qualitative assessment.

**Cultural competence framework critiques and concerns.** Williams (2006) reviewed and analyzed the epistemology of cultural competence broadly as it applies to social work and concluded that "Cultural competence is a high priority in social work, but it is not conceptualized in a way that can effectively guide practice" (p. 209). She also asserted that, "We find ourselves at a point where we have an impressive armamentarium of strategies for multicultural practice but we need coherent ways of describing the rationale underlying their use" (p. 218). This assertion encapsulates the many critiques of the cultural competence framework.

There are several ways in which the use of a cultural competence framework reveals itself to be problematic. Critiques include the lack of systems focus, minimization of a racial analysis, and methods of acquisition. First, early models of cultural competency, diversity, and multi-cultural approaches stressed tolerance for diverse persons, understanding of cultural norms, and cross-cultural strategies. In tracing social work's various movements surrounding diversity, Potocky (1997) notes that the cultural sensitivity model targets change at the level of social workers' personal beliefs and agency practices rather than work towards change across individual, agency, and systems levels. This approach emphasized the importance of practitioners' ability to adjust to client needs in order to meet them (Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner, & Schmitz, 2008). In addition to being individually focused, this approach primarily emphasized the acquisition and application of knowledge but did not equip social workers with the self-awareness or critical processing skills necessary to be flexible, versatile, generative, or truly

effective in action or practice. Jani et al. (2011) provide theoretical grounding for their critique of cultural competence by explaining that:

> Its origins lie in positivist assumptions, which inevitably produce static and essentialist perspectives about culture and fail to recognize its complex and fluid nature. Thus, the application of the concept of cultural competence has encouraged approaches to practice that focus primarily on issues of access and fail to recognize the institutional impact of social location. By relying on cultural competence as a conceptual guide social workers have neglected to pursue a transformative agenda and have defaulted to positions on practice that inadvertently reinforce the status quo. (p. 296)

Consequently, the cultural competence framework's focus on individual attitudes both created a focus on micro or clinical practice and left social workers unequipped to identify or deal with racism and oppression on all levels (Razack, 1999; Razack & Jeffery, 2002; Yee, 2005).

Second, early use of the cultural competency framework limited conceptualization to a racial and ethnic focus resulting in critiques about such a narrow scope. Students and faculty were also resistant to this approach to cultural competence. Knowledge about the complexity of personal and social identity formation as well as the intersectionality of multiple oppressions that underscore social problems, social work practices, and interventions led to the broadening of cultural competence models beyond racial and ethnic categories (Razack, 1999; Rothman, 2008) to include gender, sexuality, religion, age, ability, language, and nationality. This broader anti-oppression model addressed concerns about the cultural competence model's limited scope and minimized student and faculty's resistance to centering on race. This broadening is also problematic because it minimized the importance of race as a central mechanism of oppression

and unintentionally reinforced the notion of a color-blind lens (Razack & Jeffery, 2002; Schiele, 2007; Yee, 2005). As a result, this so called equality of oppressions paradigm downplays racism's continuing impact and historical legacy and leaves social workers individually, interpersonally, and systematically unprepared to deal with the realities of racism. This leveling of oppressions (Razack and Jeffery, 2002), though probably more comfortable to students and teachers, fails to acknowledge the racialized values and beliefs that characterize social institutions, policy and practice development and implementation, and research. Critics charge that a color-blind lens or equalizing of oppressions does not reach far enough in addressing systemic and institutionalized oppressions and that the multicultural milieu of social work's cultural competence curriculum may unintentionally reinforce a color-blind paradigm that teaches students to ignore racial differences (Schiele, 2007; Yee, 2005).

Lastly, Ben-Ari, & Strier (2010) even challenge the idea that knowledge is core to becoming culturally competent. In fact, they contend that cultural competence cannot be acquired at all but instead centers on the ethical nature of engagement with others. Johnson and Munch (2009) argue that not only are current conceptions of cultural competence flawed, they contradict social work's historical values and principles. They make an argument similar to Ben-Ari & Strier (2010) that cultural competence as currently conceptualized may not be achievable. Lum (1999) states that what is needed is a process through which the social worker develops cultural awareness, then master's knowledge and skills, before implementing an inductive learning methodology and achieving cultural competency.

Johnson and Munch (2009) emphasize that "before the conceptualization of cultural competence is further developed and, more important, before cultural competence is further

incorporated into social work education and practice, it is essential to address these fundamental tensions" (p. 229). In light of the continuing theoretical debates and challenges, Ortiz and Jani (2010, p. 175) contend that "it is widely accepted that social work education has not found its stride when it comes to teaching diversity in social work program". Given the critiques related to student outcome assessment and the importance of the outcome to engage diversity and difference in practice, it is important to consider theoretical foundations that might serve as organizing theories to guide research and methodology.

## Theoretical Foundations

This section presents two theories for understanding and critically analyzing social work education: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Systems theory. While a number of frameworks and theories have been developed for social work practice, there has been little development of theoretical perspectives specifically for social work education. Social work education, as in the whole of social work practice and many other professions, has a long history of utilizing multiple perspectives and theories. Using multiple theories allows for creativity and versatility but can also create difficulty in identifying theoretical perspectives to guide research and analysis of social work education. It is important, however, for understanding social work education and the future development of research methodology to link "practice wisdom of today's social work educators with current theories" (Anastas (2010, p. 1). CRT provides a specific frame that is useful to considering cultural competence and the outcome to engage diversity and difference in practice. System's theory offers a perspective that provides a utilitarian frame for considering the complexity of social work education with its multiple components, many actors, and conceptual diversity.

**Critical Race Theory**

Social work curriculum is required to meet CSWE standards, which define ten core competencies and serve as outcomes for assessing student achievement. These core competencies specifically include engaging diversity and difference and advancing human rights and social and economic justice (CSWE 2008). CRT because of its compatibility with the purposes and values of social work, focus on intersectionality, and centering of oppression provides a framework from which to analyze and develop social work education and in particular to design research related to engaging diversity and difference in practice. Delgado and Stefanic (2001) describe CRT as a movement that contains an activist dimension. In general CRT seeks to analyze, deconstruct, and transform power using race as its point of engagement. CRT has its roots in social constructionism and critical theory and converges with feminist thought, critical legal studies, and the civil rights movement. As social constructionist in nature, CRT emphasizes that reality is socially created and race is socially constructed rather than a biological construct (Crenshaw, 2005; Crenshaw, Cotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). As a critical theory, CRT promotes a structural approach to addressing the problems of a diverse society, rather than merely expanding access to existing resources and opportunities. CRT embraced the tenet of legal indeterminacy (the idea that not every legal case has one correct outcome) from Critical legal studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007). CRT converges with feminist thought in that it considers the relationship between power and the construction of social roles as an invisible collection of patterns and habits that make up patriarchy and other types of domination. CRT also is greatly influenced by conventional civil rights thought, which sought to redress historic wrongs, and an insistence that legal and social theory have practical

consequences. Much of CRT writing places nationalism and group empowerment in high esteem, although this has been the subject of conflict and divergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT promotes making changes in institutional arrangements while simultaneously recognizing personal distress and resistance. CRT works bi-directionally and rejects the bifurcation of micro and macro social work practice (Park, 2005).

The tenets of CRT are as follows (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001):

1. **Endemic racism**. Racism is ordinary and difficult to cure or address. Color-blind conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board only remedy the most blatant forms of discrimination.
2. **Interest convergence** (also known as material determinism). Because racism advances the interests of white elites (materially) and working-class people (physically) there are few incentives for large segments of the population to eradicate it. Changes occur when interests converge to advance the desires or needs of white elites.
3. **Social construction**. Race and races are products of social thought and relations. Society creates races and endows them with pseudo-permanent characteristics.
4. **Differential racialization**. Society racializes different groups at different times. Each race has its own origins and ever evolving history. This tenet also suggests that if one minority group is gaining ground in the United States, another is likely losing ground.
5. **Intersectionality and anti-essentialism**. People embody conflicting and overlapping identities, loyalties, and allegiances. It is impossible to reduce identity to one essential element.

6. **Unique voice of color**. CRT challenges the conception that minority status brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism.

Additionally, Delgado and Stefanic (2001) identify two major categories of CRT thought: Idealism and Realism. Idealist are described as holding that race is a social construction and that to unmake race we must change images, words, attitudes, unconscious feelings, scripts, and social teachings. Often discourse analysis fall into this category. Realists, also called economic determinists, hold that race is a means by which society allocates privilege, wealth and status and that material interests lead to the promotion of racial construction. According to realist thought, to make change, the physical circumstances of minorities' lives must change. Materialists fall into this category. These paradigmatic foundations of CRT provide a solid framework for analyzing and developing social work education consistent with the purposes of social work as stated by CSWE (2008) and the values as stated by NASW (2008).

CRT has primarily been used in legal studies and education research. It has primarily been utilized as a conceptual critical tool to create policy, debate legal determinations, and to support legal and civil rights movements. CRT's primary use in research has been in qualitative studies in education (Blair, 2010; Chaisson, 2004; Howard, 2008). It has had limited use as a tool in feminist and family studies (Crenshaw, 2005; Few, 2007). Recently, CRT is finding use in qualitative studies in human resources (Alfred & Chlup, 2010), disability studies (Newell & Kratochwill, 2007), therapist education, and marriage and family therapy (McDowell, 2004). Liao (2007) conducted a study that used an experimental design to study perceptions of subtle and ambiguous racism. A recent article provides insightful recommendations for using CRT in psychological research, going so far as to identify specific methods and statistical analysis which

could be useful. In the area of family studies, Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, and Freeman (2010) provide a comprehensive review of a decade of research utilizing CRT. They assert that although researchers have been increasingly attentive to CRT's benefits, they have not fully implemented CRT perspectives in their work even though it has the potential for generating new conceptual approaches. In sociology education (Chaisson, 2004), CRT has been used to design and implement diversity education. Apparently, despite having emerged in the mid-1970's, CRT has not been empirically tested in terms of its solidity as a theory nor has it been well studied in terms of its usefulness as a guiding theory in intervention development. It is often cited as "one of" the theoretical foundations of research or work but rarely stands alone in the social sciences, perhaps because it emerged in the field of law and has more recently been adopted by education and other fields.

**CRT and Social Work Education.** Conceptually speaking, CRT is an infant in the areas of social science. The more recent conceptual articles related to CRT potential in social work education (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Ortiz & Jani, 2010; Razack, 2009) provide ground to build upon. This creates an opportunity and a challenge to test CRT, both as to how it holds together conceptually and its utility in practice and intervention. Building on Park's (2005) conceptual work, Ortiz and Jani (2010) call for using CRT to create a transformative model for teaching diversity in social work education. These articles offer exciting possibilities for the use of CRT in social work education. Canadian scholars Razack and Jeffery (2002) argue that CRT and social work are highly compatible, and furthermore, that diversity or cultural competence training without a rigorous race analysis provides students with less than adequate perspective and tools to locate and act on exclusionary and oppressive social practices.

## Systems Theory

**Framing social work education.** Haas and Drabek (1973) described organizations as systems within systems and emphasized the open system nature of organizations with varying degrees of permeability to boundaries. Schools are a prime example of social systems, and the literature supports the application of systems theory to education systems (Begun, 2008; Bergen, 1966; Chen & Stroup, 1993; Kazemek, & Kazemek, 1992; Dechant, & Dechant, 2010; Clancy, Efken & Pesut, 2008; Potts & Hagan, 2000; Saba, 1999; Sandru & Sandru, 2009). Tarter and Hoy (2004) utilized systems theory to frame and conduct an empirical analysis of the relationship between an environmental condition, the four elements of open systems (structure, individuals, politics, and culture), and elementary school outcomes. Their research indicates that the application of systems theory to an educational system has promise for designing empirical studies. Tarter and Hoy (2001) stated that:

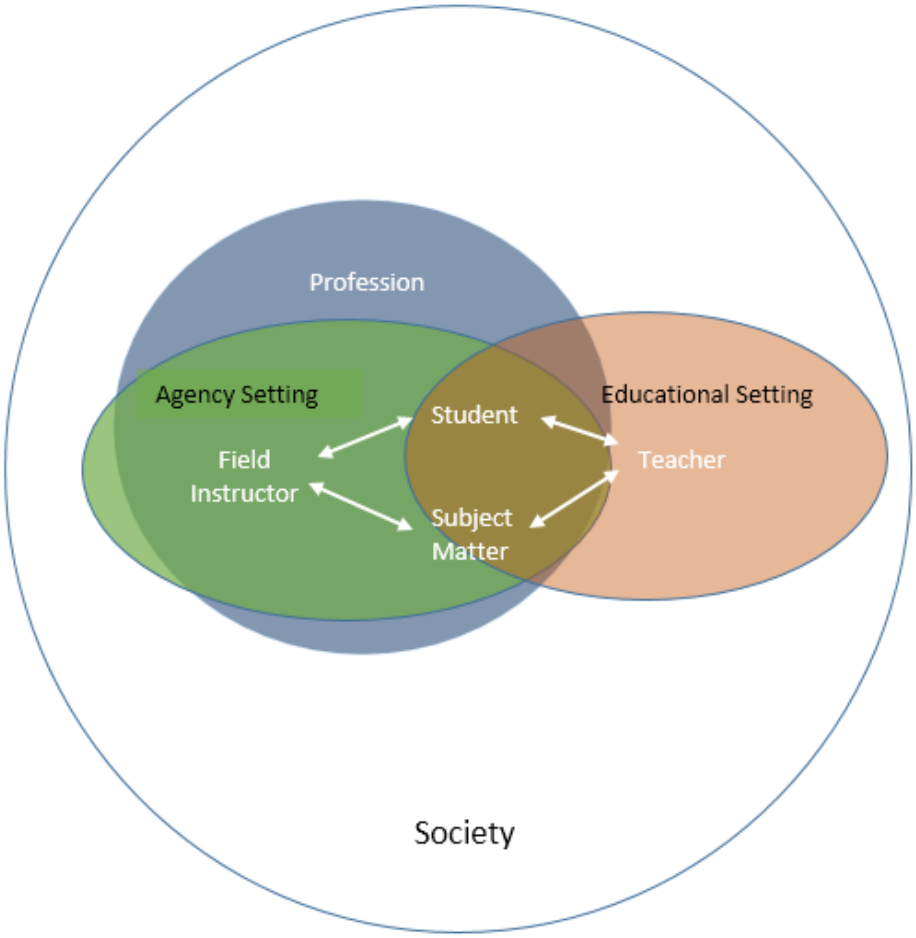
> Using a social systems model fosters systems thinking, that is, thinking of the organization in its entirety. Limiting attention to the parts of a school in the belief that improving each part leads to maximizing the whole is short sighted because it neglects the primacy of the whole, forces artificial distinction, and denies systemic functioning. The same can be said of research. Studying parts of a school is insufficient to understanding the whole. More research analyses are required that consider multiple school elements, which necessitates complex, multivariate analyses of school life.

Additionally, Hoy and Miskel (2001) observed that to understand organizations it is necessary to consider formal and informal structures. Consequently, systems theory provides a framework to better understand and test the interaction of variables that affect program operations and

outcomes. This approach can also be applied to address problems and enhance student outcomes.

**Systems models for framing social work education.** Anastas, (2010) provides an example of using systems theory to conceptualize social work education. She characterizes her framework (Figure 2) as a person-in-environment perspective, which includes two settings for social work education: the educational institution (the department or school and the university or college) and the social service agency where field learning takes place. She also noted the importance of general social context, including the social work profession and society as a whole, in impacting social work education. In her book, *Teaching in Social Work: An Educators' Guide to Theory and Practice,* the articulation of this model of teaching and learning also includes process elements by attending to the actors (teachers and students), processes, kinds of interactions, and importantly, the desired educational outcomes (Anastas, 2010). While complex and broad, this model in its focus on teaching and learning in social work does not attend to functional/structural implications, to the important role of CSWE as a setting related to social work education, nor to the importance of the role of policy to the system of social work education.

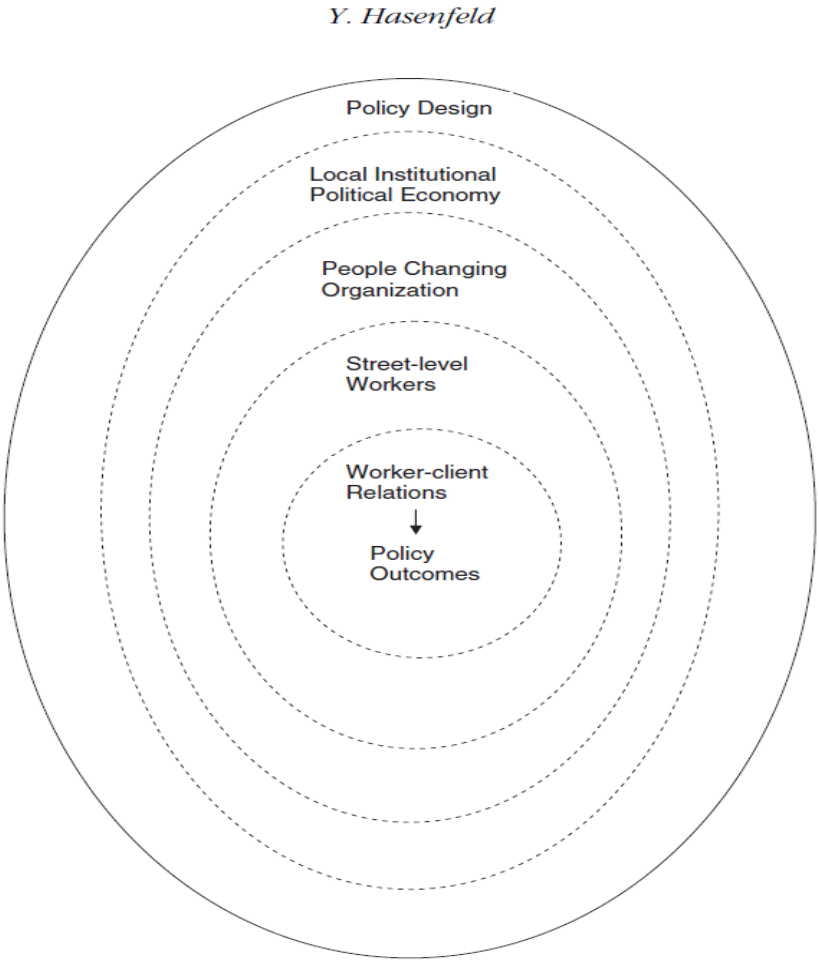
**Figure 2: Anastas' Model of Teaching and Learning in Social Work Context.**




While not specifically designed for social work education, Hasenfeld (2010) offers a theoretical model grounded in systems theory, which resembles a Russian nesting doll for the purpose of explaining the path of policy designed to change people to its outcomes (Figure 3). This model may be useful for social work education because, though generic, it includes all the components of Anastas' model and goes further to consider structural/functional context more explicitly and identifies the policy environment as a context impacting outcomes. The policy

environment constituting CSWE and the EPAS are an important element in considering social work education as a system.

**Figure 3: Hasenfeld's Model Describing Organizational Factors That Shape the Path from Policy to Outcomes (Hasenfeld, 2010).**




The outermost sphere consists of policy design. Hasenfeld describes a policy environment akin to that created by CSWE where the policy maker sets boundaries while leaving considerable room and discretion at the policy implementation level. The second sphere that Hasenfeld describes consists of the institutional political economy, which when translated to the EPAS, would be the university or college and community setting where the social work program

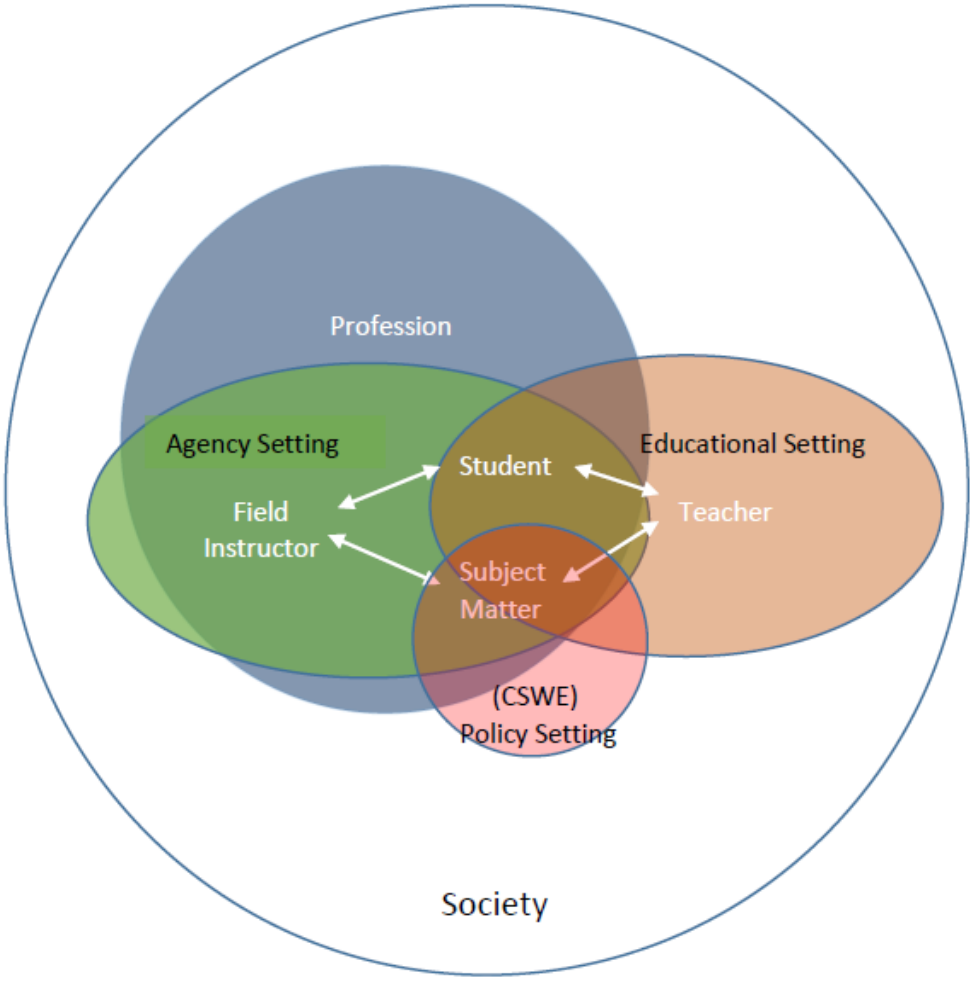
operates. This sphere includes the influence and impact of the setting on implementation and the degree to which there is an attempt to embed the values of the larger institution or community in the structures or practices. Field education in the agency setting would be included in this sphere because field education is highly dependent on local organizations and their capacity, desire, and overall suitability for serving as field education sites and their staff performing as field instructors. The third sphere in Hasenfeld's model is the organization, which in the system of social work education, translates to the social work program. The social work program is the space of curriculum development and implementation. The fourth nested sphere within the program or organization is the workers. In social work education programs those are faculty and staff. According to Hasenfeld, workers use their own discretion to develop routines to cope with their work conditions. Hasenfeld holds that workers embed their own personal values and assumptions and histories by creating strategies that guide their daily practices. Workers also share those values and strategies with other workers to establish institutional routines and norms.

The innermost nested sphere relates to the practices that create and shape worker-client relations. In a social work education setting this translates to the implementation of the curriculum and the other aspects of the educational environment. It also very importantly speaks to how policies impact faculty, staff, and student interactions. Lastly, as Hasenfeld described it, the influences of the entire implementation path determine how the EPAS impacts students. Additionally, student characteristics also impact overall student outcomes.

Taken together, Anastas and Hasenfeld's models are helpful for framing the complexities of the social work education system. Figure 4 depicts what the two models taken together might include. This combined model includes the societal context, the professional context, the policy

context (CSWE), the agency setting of field placement, and the social work program organizational setting. It illustrates the connections between both the contexts and settings and the individuals in those settings. This model also considers the subject matter or curriculum. The combination model has potential as a frame from which to consider the impact and interaction of individuals with each other and with the components of the system, as well as how the contexts interact to impact individual and systems outcomes. The combined model is framed in systems theory frame, which integrates structural and social relationships and has potential utility for the complex analysis necessary for examining social work education.

**Figure 4. Combined Model Framing Social Work Education**



Systems theory provides a foundation for understanding the whole of social work education in a systemic or integrated functional sense. It also offers a framework to guide research conceptualization and design that considers the complexity of the social work education system. However, that understanding should be enhanced with an activist orientation befitting social work education's emphasis on social justice and social change. Critical Race Theory (CRT) has potential to provide a solid foundation for this type of analysis.

## Methodology

### Phenomenology

Simply put, phenomenological research seeks to describe the meaning or essence of lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon of several individuals (Creswell, 2007, pp. 57, 58). Laverty (2003) described hermeneutic phenomenology as a process that seeks to bring understanding and disclosure of phenomena through interpretation and language. Hermeneutic phenomenology requires the researcher to engage in a process of self-reflection but does not support bracketing or setting aside of the biases and assumptions of the researcher. Rather, hermeneutic phenomenology embeds the researchers' experience and assumptions and holds them essential to the interpretive process. As a result, researchers are called upon to create an environment of co-creation with study participants and to pay close attention to their own experiences (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 176). The researcher is expected to explicitly claim the ways their experiences may relate to the issues being researched. Additionally, hermeneutic phenomenology involves selecting participants who have lived experience of the study's focus.

Van Manen (1984) described the methodological process of hermeunic phenomenology as having four basic requirements. The researcher is first required to investigate phenomenon

that interests and has meaning to her. Second, the goal is to examine a lived experience. Thirdly, the themes that emerge should identify the essential meaning of that lived experience. Last, the interrelationship of the parts to the whole should be acknowledged. Koch (1995) stated, "Hermeneutics invites participants into an ongoing conversation, but does not provide a set methodology. Understanding occurs through a fusion of horizons, which is a dialectic between the pre-understandings of the research process, the interpretive framework and the sources of information" (p. 835).

**Concept Mapping**

The examination of conceptual meaning requires a latent analysis, which is best achieved through qualitative methods. Yet, it is also important to quantify and rank the relative importance of qualitative elements and to evaluate the overall validity of findings relative to participant characteristics, thus requiring quantitative analysis. Concept mapping's use of mixed methods is an excellent match for these needs.

Concept mapping (Trochim, 1989) is a mixed method participatory approach to research design, data generation, analysis, and interpretation that translates complex qualitative data into visual depictions, or maps, of concepts through multivariate statistical techniques including multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis. Concept mapping is ideal for group conceptualization of a construct because it employs a structured process that generates conceptualizations from stakeholders' perspectives while allowing for conceptual comparisons based on stakeholder characteristics. Concept Mapping has the capacity to collect and analyze multiple perspectives from many people in a relatively short time frame. Additionally, the participatory approach to design, data generation, analysis, and interpretation that concept

mapping requires assists in designing a rigorous and relevant study that may have impact for the field.

Concept Mapping has been used for planning, evaluation, and theory building (e.g. Davidson, 2000; Falk-Krzesinki, Contractor, Fiore, Hall, Kane, Keyton, Klein, Spring, Stokols, & Trochim, 2011; Johnsen. Biegel, & Shafran, 2000; Kagan, J. M., Kane, M., Quinlan, K. M., Rosas, S., & Trochim, 2009). Concept Mapping has been used in social work research and specifically for studying the concept of cultural competency (i.e. Davis, Salzburg, & Locke, 2010; Davis, 2009; Streeter, Franklin, Kim, & Tripodi, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Poole, Duvall, & Wofford, 2006).

While Concept Mapping does not require the use of software, Global Max™ Web-based software (The Concept System® software: Copyright 1989-2001; all rights reserved, Concept Systems Inc.) offers a tool to engage a wider range of persons not restricted by time or place. The software allows participants to engage in all aspects of the study remotely and on their own schedule. Identified participants with a computer and Internet access are able to complete portions of the study and return time and again making the study accessible to a wider range of participants. Additionally, the software can quickly analyze data and generate statistics, reports, and visual depictions of findings including maps, charts, and graphs and is efficient and effective for analyzing, interpreting, and communicating the findings.

**Process.** Concept Mapping is a six stage process: (1) planning and design, (2) idea generation, (3) sorting, (4) rating, (5) data analysis and interpretation, and (6) implementation (Kane & Trochim, 2007, p. 99). The participatory nature of the approach assumes that stakeholders participate in each stage of the process. During the first stage, planning and design, the study design

is determined including development of the specific questions, sample, and recruitment strategies. Idea generation, stage two, uses brainstorming as a method to gather descriptive statements that serve as the data for the study. This activity may be completed individually or in a group setting. In stage three, sorting, participants individually sort the statements into thematic groups of their own determination. Sorting serves to structure the information into conceptually meaningful data. Each individual's sorts are entered into the computer. In stage four, participants use Likert-type scales (points as determined by the researcher) to rate each statement generated in the brainstorming phase, based on pre-determined interpretive criteria to give relative value to each statement.

In stage five, statistical analyses are conducted to produce visual maps of the ideas generated and group comparisons based on the ratings. Computer software is utilized to analyze sorted data to produce a similarity matrix that shows the number of participants who sorted each statement together. Then, multidimensional scaling (MDS), a multivariate statistical technique similar to factor analysis, produces a point map which represents each statement specially and represents the best physical two-dimensional distance approximation of the similarity data, i.e., statements which are similar are positioned in closer proximity. This results in the creation of a conceptual map showing how the participants as a whole think all the different statements are related to one another. This point map, according to Kruskal and Wish (1978 p. 7), reflects the visual configuration of the structure of data that is otherwise unseen.

A stress value, a goodness-of-fit measure resulting from computing the square root of a normalized residual sum of squares through multiple computational iterations that configures the map to the data (Kruskal & Wish, 1978, pp. 49-50), is computed. Average stress values in concept mapping range between .27 to .30 (Rosas & Kane, 2012, p. 241; Trochim, 1993). MDS

results are plotted on a point map and can then be grouped into conceptual clusters based on the mathematical analysis of the similarities. Concept Mapping software uses an agglomerative cluster analysis beginning with each statement representing its own cluster and using Ward's algorithm (Trochim, 1998) to join each statement with other statements and then other clusters progressively using sum of squares Euclidean distance measure to decide cluster merges.

The cluster solution generally refers to the number of clusters, statements exclusively included in clusters, and cluster labels. The researcher determines the number of clusters generally using multiple processes including the researcher's conceptual understanding of the statement groupings, examination of the order of cluster merges during the cluster analysis, and examination of bridging values produced to indicate statement position on the map including participants and/or stakeholders' relative and interpretive feedback. To remain true to the analytical results, the number of clusters should closely maintain the multidimensional scaling results and represent the level of specificity required within context of the conceptualization.

Bridging values are computations that allow the researcher to analyze which statements and clusters are associated with other statements and clusters on the point map and cluster map (Kane & Trochim, 2007, p. 101). Bridging values range from 0 to 1. The lower the bridging value, the more anchored the statement or cluster, meaning that the statement was more often sorted together. Statements with higher values were more often sorted with statements across the map and may serve as bridges to other clusters. Since statements that are sorted with points farther away on the map are placed somewhere in the middle of all of its statement pairings, often the cluster falling in the middle of the concept map may serve as a bridging cluster. Examination of bridging values are helpful to determine the most representative cluster merges and most meaningful cluster solution.

Generally, the final step in preparing the map for analysis is to label the clusters. Participants generate labels for the each sort category they create. Concept systems generates the top ten labels based on an analysis of the labels that participants create. The researcher in collaboration with stakeholders or participants may determine that one of these ten labels or a different label is most appropriate to represent the cluster.

Participant ratings are used to create correlational results for analysis of differences and similarities in ratings by selected descriptive variables. Average ratings may be computed for each statement and each cluster for all rating criteria depending on the research question and analysis plan. Statement ratings and cluster ratings are represented in visual maps using the Concept systems software. These visual maps depict stacked layers of the relative value of the rating for the statements or clusters. These average ratings are also used to generate visual pattern matches to compare ratings between descriptive variable groupings of individuals or between averages of rating scales. These group pattern matches are also depicted visually and a Pearson's r is computed to assess the degree of similarity between groups' patterns of average ratings.

Also during stage five, participants or stakeholders are asked to provide input into the interpretation of the data. They are provided with the results of the analysis, provide input and clarification about the concept maps, and validate the accuracy of the map depictions. They may also be asked to provide analysis about the implications and uses of the findings. In stage seven, the implementation stage, study findings are disseminated and used for action planning.

**Research Questions and Components of the Three Article Dissertation**

The above discussion supports the need for an inquiry that singles out the CSWE core competency related to cultural competency, i.e., engage diversity and difference in practice, to examine the meaning of the construct from the perspective of two components of the social work

education system, i.e. faculty and field instructors. Given the wealth of conceptual literature and debate about the construct but the dearth of research, the construct will first be explored using a purely descriptive qualitative approach. Then faculty and field instructors' responses to the meaning of the construct will be conducted using a mixed methods study design. The discussion also supports exploring the utility of one theoretical perspective (i.e. CRT) for designing a course to enhance teaching of the construct. The primary research questions for this dissertation are: (1) Does CRT have utility as an approach for developing a social justice course that will foster social work students' abilities to engage diversity and difference in practice, (2) How do social work faculty experience student attainment of effective engagement with people who are different from them; (3) How do social work faculty and field instructors conceptualize and assess students' engaging diversity and difference in practice? and, (4) How do faculty and field instructors' conceptualizations of student's engaging diversity and difference in practice differ based on role?

**Components of Three-Article Dissertation**

**Article 1.** Critical Race Theory: A foundation for social work diversity education

**Authorship.** Pulliam, R.

**Objective.** To examine the conceptual utility of utilizing critical race theory as an approach for developing a social justice course for social work to teach student's to engage diversity and difference in practice.

**Research Question.** Does CRT have utility as an approach for developing a social justice course for social work to teach student's to engage diversity and difference in practice?

**Abstract.** Social work education aims to prepare students to effectively engage with diverse people and groups. This article identifies need for using a different approach then cultural competence, provides an overview of CRT, and discusses the CRT's utility for diversity education in social work. The article proposes the development of a social justice course designed from a CRT framework. A logic model based on CRT foundations is presented and discussed. The model includes strategies, course methods, student outcomes, and influential factors. The logic model presents a framework from which to evaluate student outcomes of a social justice course.

**Targeted journal for submission.** *Journal of International Social Work*

**Article 2.** Social work faculty experience students' journey toward engaging diversity and difference in practice: A qualitative exploration

**Authorship**. Pulliam, R.

**Objective.** To explore social work faculty's qualitative experience of students' achievement of engaging diversity and difference in practice

**Research Question.** How do social work faculty experience student attainment of effective engagement with people who are different from them?

**Targeted journal for submission.** *Qualitative Social Work Research and Practice*

**Description.** This article reports the findings of a qualitative study exploring social work faculty's experience of students' demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice. Phenomenological methods were used to conduct interviews and analyze data to identify essential themes. Findings of importance include the description of a concept of student readiness and a vital meaning making process. Findings also emphasize the role of discourse,

assignments highlighting diverse identities and culture, role-playing, and simulations. Implications for social work education are discussed.

**Article 3.** Concept mapping: Social work students' engaging diversity and difference in practice

**Authorship.** Pulliam, R.

**Objective.** To examine and extricate the construct engage diversity and difference in practice. To identify and validate the conceptual elements of engaging diversity and difference.

**Research Questions.** How do social work faculty and field instructors conceptualize and assess students' engaging diversity and difference in practice? How do faculty and field instructors' conceptualizations of students' engaging diversity and difference in practice differ based on role?

**Targeted journals for submission.** *Journal of Social Work Education*

**Description.** This article reports the findings of a study of social work faculty and field instructors' conceptualizations of students' demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice. Concept Mapping was used to generate a ten-cluster visual map representation containing 47 statements describing the concept. Faculty with field liaison responsibilities, faculty without field liaison responsibilities, and field instructors were compared by thematic categories and individual elements. Average ratings of importance, ease of assessment, and whether assessed and comparisons by role are for each element are presented and discussed.

## Chapter 2: Critical Race Theory: A Foundation for Social Work Diversity Education


### Abstract

Social work education aims to prepare students to effectively engage with diverse people and groups. This article identifies need for using a different approach then cultural competence, provides an overview of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and discusses the utility of the CRT to diversity education in social work education. The article proposes the development of a social justice course designed from a CRT framework. A logic model based on CRT foundations is presented and discussed. The model includes strategies, course methods, student outcomes, and influential factors. The logic model presents a framework from which to evaluate student outcomes from a social justice course.


### Introduction

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE, 2008), the accrediting organization for baccalaureate and master's level social work programs in the United States, defines the purpose of the social work profession as:

> …to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person and environment construct, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, social work's purpose is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons (p. 1).

Social work education strives to promote social work's purposes as CSWE (2008) defines it and build from foundational values of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2008). These values; service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of

human relationships, integrity and competence, are fundamental. Yet, the profession's charge to actualize these ideals is not easily fulfilled and in fact has presented a continuing challenge in the practice of social work education.

Social work education should prepare students to engage in social work practice, research and teaching in ways consistent with these purposes and values. Social workers practice in multiple settings, with diverse populations, and at multiple levels of practice. The nature of social work requires engagement with and among people, groups, and communities who are at the crossroads of oppressions and lack of privilege. Research, practice and education should not only consider the impact of interventions or policy on people and groups at the intersections of multiple oppressions, but also be representative of the ideologies, epistemologies, and realities of those people, groups, and communities in the intersections of oppressions.

Social workers are as diverse as the settings they work within and the populations with which they work, but individual social workers are challenged to work in settings and with populations with which they have had little previous experience or share few or no cultural or ethnic experiences. Just by the nature of the privilege that education and professionalization provide there can be a great gap between social workers' lived experiences and the people, groups, and communities with whom they are charged to engage. It is certainly not possible, and is not necessarily desirable, that social workers limit their work to the populations or settings that are most similar to them individually.

Social work education programs have attempted to prepare students for this in many ways, generally using a cultural competency model (also referred to as cultural sensitivity and multi-cultural models) as part of the process. Use of various cultural competence models has held some

success particularly in expanding student's knowledge and placing skills tools in their proverbial toolboxes, it has fallen short of providing them with the critical analysis and self-awareness processing skills that are necessary to have the versatility required to work competently with diverse populations. It can be said that tools without the critical analysis and processing skills to know how, with whom, or when to use them is at the very least ineffective and possibly even dangerous.

Additionally, CSWE accredited social work education programs meet standards which defines ten core competencies that must be included in the curriculum. Bachelor's (BSW) and master's (MSW) programs face challenges ensuring that all those competencies are adequately reflected in required courses. This requires that teaching for diversity and cultural competence be done in effective and efficient ways. Social work programs generally attempt to accomplish this by including a single course in the curriculum and integrating concepts in other courses and in field education. If one course carries most of the responsibility to teach students how to work competently with diverse populations, that course should effectively provide the skill tools, general knowledge, and the critical analysis and self-awareness processing skills that can be applied in other courses, particularly field education, and ultimately in practice. Critical Race Theory provides a framework from which to develop a course for BSW and MSW social work curriculum that meets the needs of social work diversity education.

**Challenges of currently used curricular approaches.** The attempt to teach Social Work students to "engage diversity and difference in practice" and "advance human rights and social and economic justice" (CSWE, 2008 p. 5), has historically been attempted through a cultural competence framework. Teaching cultural competence with diverse populations referred to

teaching about individuals and groups from non-White racial, ethnic, or cultural origins. The origins and development of the cultural competence model and its role in social work ideology, practice, and pedagogy are prevalent in social work literature (e.g., Potocky, 1997; Rothman, 2008; Schiele, 2007; Spencer, Lewis, & Gutiérrez, 2000). However, the cultural competence framework revealed itself to be problematic in several ways.

The cultural competence frameworks' focus on individual attitudes creates a focus on micro or clinical practice leaving social workers unequipped to identify or deal with racism and oppression on meso and macro levels. (Pollack, 2004; Razack, 1999; Razack & Jeffery, 2002; Yee, 2005). Potocky (1997) traced the historical path of various movements related to diversity and noted that cultural sensitivity models target change at the level of social workers' personal beliefs and agency practices, whereas anti-oppression models work to address change across individual, agency, and systems levels.

Evolving knowledge about the complexity of personal and social identity formation, as well as the intersectionality of multiple oppressions that underscore social problems, social work practices, and interventions, has led to the broadening of cultural competence model to encompass an anti-oppression mode which goes beyond racial and ethnic categories to include gender, sexuality, religion, age, ability, language, and nationality (Razack, 1999; Rothman, 2008). This addressed the issue which limited the scope of influence of cultural competence models. It also minimized the difficulties related to student and faculty resistance to the centering of race. But, by minimizing the importance of race as a central mechanism of oppression, this unintentionally reinforced the notion of a color-blind lens (Razack & Jeffery, 2002; Schiele, 2007; Yee, 2005). Schiele (2007) asserts that the resulting equality of oppressions paradigm

downplays racism's continuing impact and historical legacy and leaves social workers individually, interpersonally and systematically unprepared to deal with the realities of racism. Leveling or equalizing types of oppressions (Razack & Jeffery, 2002) may make students and teachers more comfortable addressing the topic, but, it fails to acknowledge the racialized values and beliefs that characterize social institutions, policy and practice development and implementation, and research. CRT proponents hold that a color-blind lens or equalizing of oppressions does not reach far enough in addressing systemic and institutionalized oppressions. These critics charge that by equalizing race in a multicultural milieu, social work's cultural competence curriculum may unintentionally reinforce a color-blind paradigm that teaches students to ignore racial differences (Schiele, 2007; Yee, 2005).

Cultural competency, diversity, and multi-cultural approaches stress tolerance for diverse persons, understanding of cultural norms, and cross-cultural strategies, and emphasizes the importance of practitioners' ability to adjust to client needs in order to meet them (Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner, & Schmitz, 2008). This individually focused approach primarily emphasizes acquiring and applying knowledge but does not equip social workers with the self-awareness or critical processing skills necessary to be flexible, versatile, generative, or truly effective in action or practice. Additionally, this approach is often realized through emphasis on populations-at-risk which in reality is an emphasis on the different from the norm. Kumashiro (2001) comments on why this strategy is not effective:

> The focus on difference fails to change that which is not-different, namely, the norm. Although a curriculum that aims for inclusion may succeed in teaching that the different or the Other is as normal or important as the norm, it does not necessarily change the very

> definition of "normal" and de-center the "mythical norm", namely, the White American, male, middle class, heterosexual identities that are traditionally privileged in society. Learning about differences will be accomplished through lenses already colored by the norm, as when we learn about Others in comparison to or contrast with the Self. What this means is, adding difference does not really change teaching and learning practices that affirm our sense of normalcy (p. 5).

Ortiz & Jani (2010) contend social work education has not found an effective way to teach diversity. This extends to the inadequacy of current methods of teaching to meet student outcomes of engaging diversity and difference in practice. In addition the cultural competence approach falls short of advancing human rights and social and economic justice (CSWE 2008). It is possible to consider these separately achievable goals but it is more effective to accomplish them together given they are symbiotic and that social work programs are challenged to ensure that the ten competencies are concretely included in curriculum. Employing a CRT framework provides the best alternative to ensure social work education attends to CSWE requirements and NASW values.

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a framework from which to analyze and develop social work education. CRT is described by Delgado & Stefanic (2001) as a movement with an activist dimension that tries to understand and change society for the better. In general CRT seeks to analyze, deconstruct and to transform power by using race as its point of engagement. CRT is rooted in social constructionism and critical theory and converges with feminist thought, critical legal studies, and the civil rights movement. Social constructionist in nature, CRT embraces the

concept of reality being socially created and specifically advocates that race is a socially construct rather than biological. (Crenshaw, 2005; Crenshaw, Cotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

As a critical theory, CRT promotes a structural approach to addressing the problems of a diverse society, rather than merely expanding access to existing resources and opportunities. CRT embraced the tenant from Critical Legal Studies of legal indeterminacy (the idea that not every legal case has one correct outcome) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007) CRT converges with feminist thought in that it considers the relationship between power and the construction of social roles as an invisible collection of patterns and habits that make up patriarchy and other types of domination. CRT also is greatly influenced by conventional civil rights thought which sought to redress historic wrongs and an insistence that legal and social theory have practical consequences. Many authors writing about CRT hold nationalism and group empowerment in high esteem, although, this also serves as a point of conflict and divergence. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT promotes making changes in institutional arrangements while simultaneously recognizing personal distress and resistance. CRT works multi-directionally and social workers writing about CRT reject the bifurcation of micro, meso, and macro social work practice (Park, 2005)

The tenets of CRT are as follows (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001):

1. **Endemic racism**. Racism is ordinary and difficult to cure or address. Color-blind conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board only remedy the most blatant forms of discrimination.

2. **Interest convergence.** Because racism advances the interests of white elites and working-class people large segments of the population have few incentives to eradicate it. Changes occur when interests converge to advance the desires or needs of white elites. This convergence is also known as material determinism.
3. **Social construction**. Race and races are products of social thought and relations. Society creates races and endows them with pseudo-permanent characteristics.
4. **Differential racialization**. Society racializes different groups at different times. Each race has its own origins and ever evolving history. This tenet also suggests that if one minority group gains ground in the U.S. another is likely losing ground.
5. **Intersectionality and anti-essentialism**. People embody conflicting and overlapping identities, loyalties and allegiances. Identity cannot be reduced to one essential element.
6. **Unique voice of color**. Minority status brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism.

Additionally, Delgado and Stefanic (2001) identify two major categories of CRT thought: Idealism and Realism. Idealism is described as holding that race is a social construction and that to unmake race images, words, attitudes, unconscious feelings, scripts and social teachings must be changed. Discourse analysts are often considered idealist. Realism, also called economic determinism, holds that race is a means by which society allocates privilege, wealth and status and that material interests lead the promotion of racial construction. According to realist thought, to make change, the physical circumstances of minority's lives must change. Materialists fall into this category.

**Application of CRT to a Social Justice Model**

Given the critiques of the cultural competence model it makes sense to consider a more comprehensive model. A social justice model informed by CRT provides a more comprehensive approach. Bell (2007) defines the goals of social justice education as "[enabling] people to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in the institutions and communities of which they are a part (p. 1)." She further indicates that "social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, and the broader work in which we live (p. 2)." NASW begins its description of the ethical values of social justice with "Social workers pursue social change, particularly with and on behalf of vulnerable and oppressed individuals and groups of people (NASW, p. 3)." These definitions require more than the cultural competence model delivers. Additionally, the social justice model potentially attends more comprehensively to the two CSWE (2008) standards, "engage diversity and difference in practice" and "advance human rights and social and economic justice" (p. 4). In addition, the social justice model goes further than the cultural competence model and incorporates the critical analytical tool building concepts needed meet an additional CSWE (2008) core competency "apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments (p. 5)."

CRT uses a critical analytical framework that seeks to understand oppression, is action/activism oriented and works on the individual and institutional level which parallels Bell's (2007) and NASW's (2008) definitions of social justice. Three domains, critical analysis and

self-awareness process, knowledge, and action, that are inherent to the two categories of CRT, realism and idealism, match the goals of a social justice model well. Ortiz and Jani (2010) assert that:

> [The] CRT paradigm reflects a clear commitment to the pursuit of social justice for those encountering oppression. Based on this commitment to changing social institutions, CRT seeks to uncover the mechanisms and structures that actually disadvantage people, even those ostensibly designed by social institutions to serve the needy. Those who profess CRT principles view with suspicion approaches to intervention that merely assist marginalized persons, families, groups, or communities to acquiesce to a racist structure. Rather, CRT-oriented practice endeavors to change structures that are the source of the original problem (p. 183).

Ortiz and Jani (2010) build Park's (2005) conceptual work to call for the use of CRT in creating a transformative model for teaching diversity in social work education. These conceptual articles offer exciting possibilities for CRT's use in social work education. Canadian scholars Razack and Jeffery (2002) argue that CRT and social work are highly compatible, and furthermore, that diversity or cultural competence training without rigorous race analysis provides students with insufficient perspective and tools to locate and act on exclusionary and oppressive social practices.

CRT also has been used as a framework in education programs, particularly as a tool for teacher education. Like teachers, social workers need preparation to work with diverse populations. Infusing CRT into teacher training curricula has been successful in mitigating the

pitfalls of the cultural competency model although the persistence of a "race neutral" ideology in education continues to hamper broader application of CRT in teacher training (Lopez, 2003).

**CRT Concepts for Consideration in Social Justice Course Design**

**Unique voice**: CRT's assumption that minority status brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and racism is both a major strength and flaw of the theory. It is a strength because it gives voice to people who have been marginalized and silenced. It is a flaw because it creates the assumption that one's individual truths can be generalized to whole groups of people. Such generalization can be problematic. When coupled with the complexity of the lived experiences of people at the intersections of oppressed identities, it is even less likely that one story can shed much light on multiple realities. In fact, it creates the probability of a cacophony of voices that are "too" unique to be of much use in developing interventions, models or policy for social work practice. The notion of unique voice also wrongly assumes that having a minority identity brings insight into one's own situation, the historical context of that situation or its political and social consequences. The notion of unique voice also brings up the issue of who has the ability to research or integrate CRT into practice. It conceivably means that white students have no role in articulating and analyzing issues related to race. Given these concerns, for strategic use of this concept of CRT in social work education, it would be important to utilize the notion of unique voice between and with-in racial or other identities as both a way to give voice to minorities and to give identity to "whiteness" or other privilege. Acknowledging and placing intersectionality in context and providing room for the creation of the "collective voice" in the classroom as a reflection of multiple experiences, identities and perspectives is necessary.

Analysis and critique must also be encouraged among the whole classroom community while honoring and making space for minority voices in safety.

**Objective truth doesn't exist**: CRT asserts that objective truth does not exist (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In the context of social work education this assertion has potential to create a liberatory stance and constructionist approach that may serve to promote the critical analysis and processing that will benefit students in applying knowledge and skills to multiple settings and populations. The assertion that objective truth does not exist has most relevance to deconstructing the sense of Other and normality that Kumashiro (2001) discussed. Potentially, asserting that there is no objective truth may serve to shake up the whole notion of difference from the norm. In effect, if there is no objective truth, there is no norm. Yet, this notion of no objective truth must be put into a more practical perspective to encourage the use of evidence based practice and the creation of testable interventions. Additionally, students need to be equipped with tools to build practice as well as to deconstruct practice.

**Race is the dominant factor in people's subjugation**. Razack and Jeffery (2002) argue that traditional diversity or cultural competence training provides students with less than adequate perspective and tools to locate and act on exclusionary and oppressive social practices because it lacks a rigorous approach to race analysis. Centering race is the most controversial components of CRT. Without this centering, race quickly gets abandoned as a concern because it is a much riskier concept to introduce into any debate or topic of discussion. Ortiz and Jani (2009) write about the importance of centering race in social work diversity education as follows CRT begins with the premise that our society is far from race neutral in our laws and basic social structures, and in turn these larger social entities influence our everyday individual thoughts,

actions, and interactions. This macro-to-micro view fits well with social work's systems perspective and draws the focus away from cultural neutrality and toward race consciousness. From that purview, students can then move on to understand other forms of oppression beyond racism without race getting lost by attempts to equalize the impact of oppressions.

CRT also explicitly challenges the notion of color-blindness and accounts for the origins of race, and its meanings, and implications. Thus, infusing CRT into diversity curriculum does has the potential to produce students who notice racial difference and acknowledge racism's persistent and impactful legacy. The CRT promotions of anti-essentialism and intersectionality requires consideration of the multiple-dimensionality of identity and oppression. This creates an opportunity for exploring and developing the critical analysis and self-awareness processing, knowledge and action to address multiple oppressions. This is also compatible with the charge of social work education to teach students and provide opportunity to develop and demonstrate competency across multiple dimensions of diversity including "age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation" (CSWE, 2008 p. 5). Additionally, integrating race and other identities and oppressions provides the basis for creating community coalitions. In the case of social work education situated in the classroom, each student will be able to identify ways in which oppressions and opportunities impact them and how they can be an ally to others. This identification of interest convergence will create a shared impetus for analysis and action without alienating students with particular characteristics.

**Storytelling.** One tool that CRT proponents have utilized with success particularly in the legal arena is narrative analysis or storytelling (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) through use of

parables, autobiography, and counterstories. This storytelling is constructively used to bridge aps of understanding and empathy and with counterstrorytelling to destructively to attack embedded preconceptions that marginalize others or conceal their humanity. Gates (1989 p. 17) articulates storytelling's value by saying, "The values that we cherish and wish to preserve, the behavior that we wish to censure, the fears and dread that we can barely confess in ordinary language, the aspirations and goals that we most dearly prize—all of these things are encoded in the stories that each culture invents and preserves for the next generation, stories that, in effect, we live by and through." Delgado & Stefanic (2001 p. 49) speak of storytelling and counterstorytelling as a "cure for silencing". This is particularly useful given the difficulties inherent in talking about racism and other oppression where persons whose identities are the same as the dominant group might feel defensive or resistant and persons whose identities are the same as the minority groups may feel unsafe or silenced. (Carter-Black, 2007; Senehi et al., 2009) Storytelling, in the context of the classroom may be exercised with the use of popular culture including contemporary and historically relevant literature, music, film, and social media as well as creating structured or semi-structued opportunities for students to tell and analyze own their stroies.

**Realism and Idealism.** Realism and idealism have been described as categories of CRT. When looked at separately they suggest criticism, analysis and action with very different and exclusive targets and mechanisms of action. When viewed as complementary they describe points of departure for action rather than mutually exclusive ways of thinking, being or truths. These categories correspond very well to the three domains of outcomes (critical analysis and self-awareness process, knowledge, and action). Idealism with its emphasis on thinking, analysis

and changing social constructions corresponds to the concept of critical analysis and self-awareness processing and knowledge acquisition, while realism corresponds well with the concept of action.

**Logic Model Discussion**

The logic model depicted in Figure 5 outlines the conceptual flow of a social justice course developed with CRT foundations. The model identifies the following CRT foundational tenets as being used to develop the strategies for the course: Centrality of race, intersectionality, anti-essentialism, social construction, institutional and individual constitution of oppression (idealism and realism), and interest convergence.

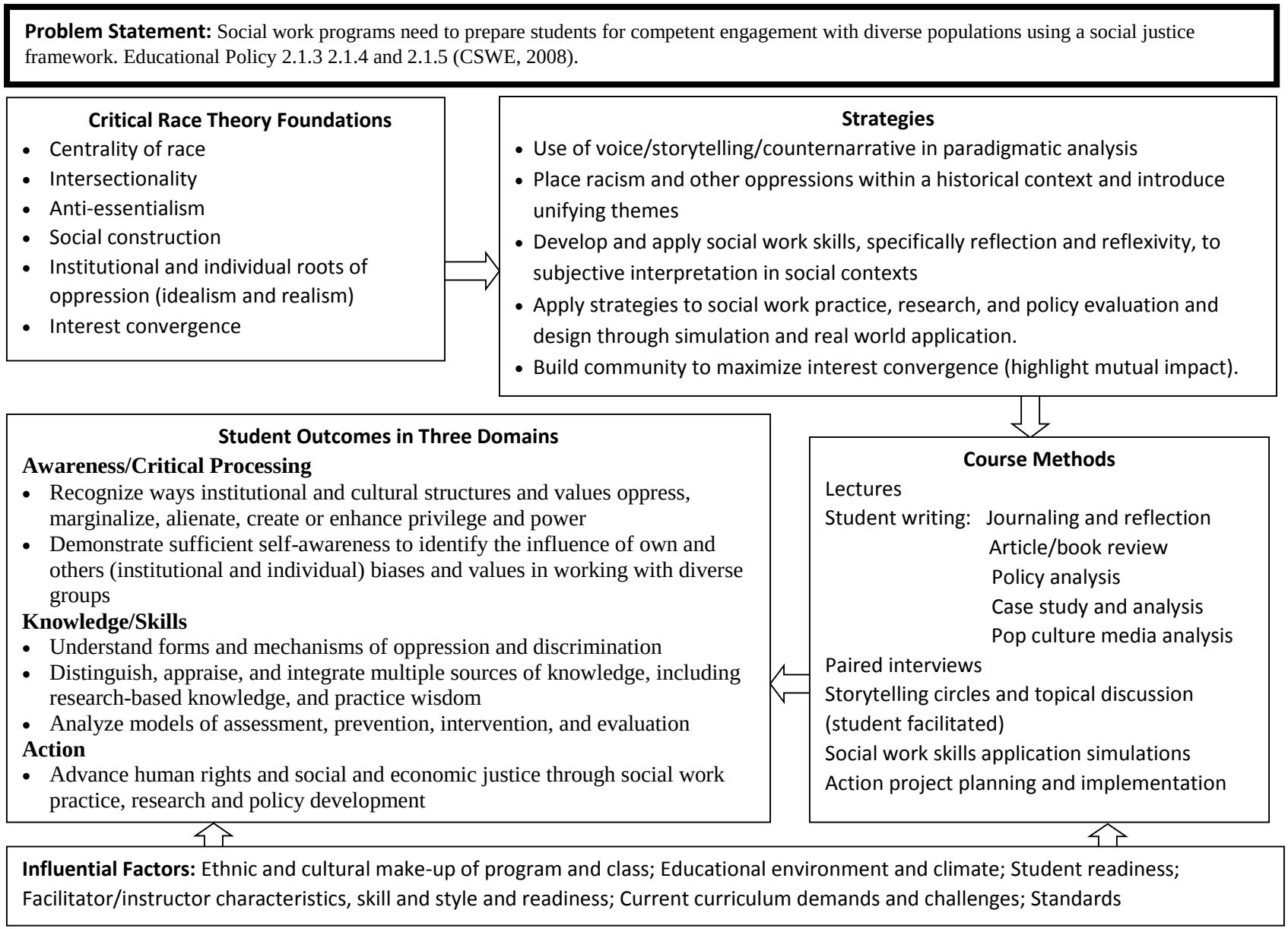
**Strategies.** The strategies developed using a CRT framework that are important for developing a course on social justice for social work education are: (1) Use voice/storytelling/counter narrative in paradigmatic analysis, (2) Place racism and other oppressions within a historical context and introduce unifying themes, 3) Develop and apply social worker skills, specifically reflection and reflexivity, to subjective interpretation in social contexts, 4) Apply strategies to social work practice, research, and policy evaluation and design through simulation and real world application, and (5) Build community to maximize interest convergence (highlight mutual impact). These strategies are reflected in the course described below.

**Course Methods.** The delivery of the course is of utmost importance to reach the outcomes in each of the three domains: awareness/critical processing, knowledge/skills, and action. The course methods were conceptualized with the CRT strategies and the influential factors in mind. Creating a classroom community that provides each student with a sense of safety, agency, and

opportunities for concrete application will minimize resistance and maximize venturing into the risky territory of self-disclosure and analysis necessary to meet the course goals. Utilizing popular culture and storytelling (Carter-Black, 2007; Senehi, et al., 2009) make the course methods relevant and creative. Supplemental Data A provides an example of a lesson that uses each of the course strategies to teach about targeted identities and create interest conversion. Supplemental Data B is the handout for this activity.

The course methods also encompass working at the micro and macro levels and move from the abstract to the concrete to maximize on the various learning styles and interest that students might have. Lectures are intended to provide basic content knowledge and to place racism and other oppressions in a historical context. While race is centered in the course design; course activities can link and show how all oppressions are interrelated. The concretizing of action by simulation and real world application in the design and implementation of an action project challenges students to use social work skills of reflexivity and reflection to analyze content and design action.

**Figure 5. Logic Model: Critical Race Theory as the Foundation for a Social Work Course on Social Justice**



**Influential Factors.** Challenges associated with delivering effective cultural competence education include student readiness, teacher preparation, and resistance from both groups. (Garcia & Van Soest, 2000; Razack, 2009) Lack of student and teacher readiness to engage in difficult discussions about race or other oppressions is a core issue in the teaching of diversity content in social work education. A common reaction by students to discussing racism, structural disadvantages, or oppression is resistance to the material, particularly when the conversation turns to issues of privilege, and White privilege in particular. Common student reactions are to deny their own role in occupying privileged or more powerful social identity positions, become angry, display resentment, or manifest a sense of guilt (Abrams & Gibson, 2007). One response to this problem is to create a problem-posing classroom environment which Freire (2007) contends is one where "the students…are now—critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" and can then "develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation (p. 81)". Instructors can most concretely encourage students become co-investigators and holding objective truth very lightly by asking students to express other ways to think about or other truths revealed in any issue, situation, or observation in addition to their way of thinking and their truth.

Teaching this content has its own challenges which can mirror those of students but also relate to teaching style or characteristics. Garcia and Van Soest's (2000, p. 35) empirical study of 304 graduate- and undergraduate-level social work faculty found that faculty of color and junior faculty were more likely to respond with sensitivity to

conflicts or arguments about diversity issues than were White or more senior faculty. They argue that faculty must "develop comfort with discussing issues related to diversity in order to demonstrate how to place perspective on heated and strained interaction" (2000, p. 35). This might be best accomplished by instructors who are skilled teachers as well as skilled social work practitioners. Additionally, the overall climate including the diversity of the university or college's students, faculty and staff, the social work program's environment, and the focus of the social work program are expected to influence the classroom structure, functioning, and environment.

**Outcomes.** The outcomes are reflective of CSWE (2008) EPAS standards to "engage diversity and difference in practice" and "advance human rights and social and economic justice" and can be measured through qualitative and quantitative means. The three CRT outcome domains (self-awareness/critical processing, knowledge/skill, and action), the definitions of social justice presented in this article, and the CSWE core competencies identified are compatible with each other. Course methods provide an opportunity for integration and demonstration of all outcomes domains. In addition formative assessment is intrinsic to the model in that students can demonstrate their process of achieving outcomes through class discussion, skills simulations, writing assignments and action planning. Summative assessment is reflected in final papers and implementation of action planning.

## Conclusion

The article outlines several problems of diversity education through a cultural competence framework and builds on the literature about the utility of a social justice

framework informed by CRT to develop a course model for diversity education. CRT provides a solid framework for developing activist-oriented critical analysis. In developing a social justice course CRT provides the tools to attend to the problems inherent to educating on diversity. The challenges of utilizing CRT are easily accommodated and the strategies and methods that flow from the CRT perspective work well to accomplish the need to meet the CSWE accreditation standards for diversity education, advance critical analysis requirements, and adhere to social work values. This is not to insinuate that one course can meet all the needs for diversity education in a social work program's curriculum. It does however provide a conceptual tool with potential to enhance teaching to meet the core competencies.

The logic model described in this article can serve as a starting point for developing an effective social justice course. It provides a solid foundation for organizing existing teaching activities, readings, and materials and for developing new materials and activities. Additionally, it provides a framework from which to evaluate student outcomes. Recognizing that context impacts outcomes and that the proof of the pudding is in the actual human interaction that occurs in the classroom, the model could also provide a point of reference for research to identify the relationship of the influential factors (ethnic and cultural make-up of program and class; educational environment and climate; student readiness; instructor characteristics, skill and style and readiness; current curriculum demands and challenges; and standards) to student demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice outcomes.

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Supplemental Data: A

Targeted and Privileged Identities Exercise

Strategies:

- Place racism and other oppressions within a historical context and introduce unifying themes.
- Develop and apply social work skills, specifically reflection and reflexivity, to subjective interpretation in social contexts.
- Build community to maximize interest convergence (highlight mutual impact).

Part I

45-60 minutes

This exercise is designed to assist students in developing a common understanding of some identity categories and the characteristics that have had influence on historical power and privilege. They will identify their characteristics which have been historically targeted. Students will also identify the particular historical privilege that they may hold and get a sense of the opportunities to serve as an aspiring ally to others not holding such privilege

Handout: Targeted and Privileged Identities

Instructions for using the handout. The instructor should give each participant a copy of the handout, ask students to review it, and explain that the first part of the activity will be done individually. The instructor should explain that each person will determine how they would identify themselves based on the descriptions in each category and check either under the targeted category or the privileged category. The instructor should explain that the targeted category is specifically labeled to identify those characteristics which have been historically marginalized through institutional oppression. One example that the instructor may wish to use is:

*In the U.S. there were laws that discriminated against some categories of people (blacks, immigrants, women, people with disabilities etc.…). These laws resulted in the historic disadvantage of people who fit these characteristics. These laws were developed because people who were prejudiced against others having particular characteristics used that power to enact laws or practices that institutionalized disadvantage related to that prejudice. Even after laws or particular practices change, there are lasting results of the institutional oppression. This idea can be applied whether or not discriminatory practices were enacted in law. Consequently, the use of the word "targeted" speaks to this institutional history.*

The instructor should also explain the use of the word "privilege." Privilege might be explained as an unearned advantage or immunity which is granted based on characteristics. It should be explained that the handout does not acknowledge intersectionality but is still useful in thinking about power, privilege, and identity. Additionally, some characteristics are subject to situation, context, and perception. Students should be instructed to use their present context (e.g., a student at this university) to determine the categories they currently occupy.

For example: Latinas may be considered to be light-skinned in the context of other people of color and be considered dark-skinned among other Latinas or with White people.

Students should be given 5-7 minutes to complete their handout. Students should be asked if there is anyone who does not have at least one category for which they identified that they are targeted. Students should be asked if there is anyone who does not have at least one category for which they identified that they are privileged. It is unusual for anyone to not have at least one category of privilege and one of targeting. The instructor may note that all areas of privilege indicate opportunities to behave as an aspiring ally for those targeted in that area. Additionally, one targeted area is not more important than another except in the way that individuals, society, and institutions practice oppression contextually.

Discussion Questions:

> What is the impact of context?
>
> Would anyone be willing to tell a story about the impact of context on his/her identity or experience of oppression?
>
> What opportunities to be an ally does the story reveal?
>
> What micro, meso, or macro implications or opportunities for social work practice does the story reveal?

Part II

(30-45 minutes)

Give students a copy of Audre Lordes's short essay "There is no Hierarchy of Oppression" and provide a few minutes to read it:

Lorde, A., Byrd, R. P., Cole, J. B., & Guy-Sheftall, B. (2009). *I am your sister: Collected and unpublished writings of audre lorde*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pg 219-220

The instructor can then lead a discussion related to intersectionality, utilizing one or more of the following questions:

> What does it mean that there is no hierarchy of oppression?
>
> What is the impact of multiple oppressions or being targeted in multiple ways?
>
> Would anyone be willing to tell a story about the impact of multiple oppressions on her/him?

The exercise may be concluded by asking students to highlight what they learned from the activity and conversation.

**Supplemental Data: B**

Targeted and Privileged Identity Exercise Handout

| Identity | Privileged | Targeted | I am privileged | I am targeted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Race | White | Black, Latin@, Asian, Arab, Indigenous | | |
| Color | light-skinned | dark-skinned | | |
| Ethnicity | European-American | Latin@, Asian-American, African-American, Indigenious, etc | | |
| Nationality | U.S. born, documented | foreign-born, undocumented | | |
| Class | upper class<br>upper middle-class | working-class, working poor, poor | | |
| Gender Identity and Expression | born male<br>pass as male | women,<br>transgender,<br>gender queer | | |
| Sexuality | heterosexual | lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, | | |
| Age | adult | children, youth, elder | | |
| Ability | abled | differently abled | | |
| Religion | Christian | Jewish, Muslim, Mormon, etc. | | |
| Other | | | | |

# Chapter 3: Social Work Faculty Experience of Students' Journey Toward Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice: A Qualitative Exploration


## Abstract

This article reports the findings of a qualitative study exploring social work faculty's experience of students' demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice. Phenomenological methods were used to conduct interviews and analyze data to identify essential themes. Findings of importance include the description of a concept of student readiness, and a vital meaning making process. Findings also emphasize the role of discourse, assignments highlighting diverse identities and culture, role-playing and simulations. Implications for social work education are discussed.


## Introduction

As a field instructor in a shelter for survivors of domestic violence, I remember supervising one social work student in particular. She was young, white, academically accomplished, and generally personable, but, she often acted and spoke in ways that were culturally insensitive or inappropriate. When a client reacted to her insensitivity, she found it difficult to move with the client beyond her mistakes. When she received feedback from me or other staff she was unable to understand what had been problematic about her actions. Although she seemed willing to engage with people she was different from, she just didn't get It. Over many years as a field instructor for bachelor- and master's-level social work students, I supervised other students who also didn't seem to be able to appropriately engage with diverse people and many others who could. It was not clear then and it remained unclear to me what made the difference. For that matter, it

was never clear to me just what It was. Despite ample literature about cultural competency, the concepts related to cultural competency did not seem to capture the qualitative essence of this competency. In many ways the term cultural competency seemed to me to be a placeholder for this other deeper, richer something. This study was designed to explore and uncover that deeper, richer competency through the experiences of social work faculty who have a role of paying attention to and assessing in the students that they teach.

**Background**

Social workers practice in varied settings, with diverse populations, at multiple levels of practice. The nature of social work requires engagement with and among people, groups, and communities who are at the crossroads of oppressions and lack of privilege. Social workers are as diverse as the settings in which they work and the populations with which they work. Social workers often work in settings and with populations with which they may have had little previous experience and with whom they share few characteristics. It is certainly not possible, nor desirable, that social workers limit their work to the populations or settings that are most similar to them. Social work education programs are required to prepare students to reach beyond what is familiar and engage with skill in the foreign territory of cultures, communities, and populations that are different from them while holding the values inherent to social work (CSWE, 2008; NASW, 2008). The CSWE core competency for students which encompasses this is "to engage diversity and difference in practice. One way social work education programs

attempt to do this is by utilizing a cultural competency (also called cultural sensitivity and multi-cultural) model.

Much has been written about models and frameworks for teaching cultural competency or diversity (Abrams & Gibson, 2007; Adams, 2007; Marshack, Hendricks, & Gladstein, 1994; Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Curriculums and manuals for teaching diversity (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Armour, Bain, & Rubio, 2007; Moore, Madison-Colmore, & Collins, 2005) are plentiful. Much of the research and scholarly writing concerning acquisition of cultural competence skills has been related to particular teaching techniques, including storytelling (Carter-Black, 2007; Senehi Senehi, Flaherty, Kirupakaran, Kornelsen, Matenge, & Skarlato (2009), dialogic learning (Rozas, 2007), structured controversy (Steiner, Brzuzy, Gerdes, & Hurdle, 2003), and instructional technology (Lee & Bertera, 2007) among other methods.

Culturally competent practice in social work is most often defined and conceptualized as competency in attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Van Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004). Lum (1999) indicated that what is needed is a process to move the social worker from cultural awareness to mastering knowledge and skills, then to implementing inductive learning and finally to cultural competence. Ben-Ari & Strier (2010) even challenge the idea that knowledge is core to cultural competence; they contend cultural competence cannot be acquired, but rather that cultural competence centers on the ethical nature of engagement with others. Johnson and Munch (2009) argue that current conceptions of cultural competence are flawed and contradict social work's historical values and principals. Similar to Ben-Ari & Strier (2010), they argue that cultural

competence (CC) as currently conceptualized may not be achievable. They further state that "before the conceptualization of CC is further developed and, more important, before CC is further incorporated into social work education and practice, it is essential to address these fundamental tensions" (p. 229).

The lack of agreement in the conceptualization of cultural competence in social work may be the source of difficulty with creating social work education programming that effectively addresses cultural competence. Williams (2006) provides a thorough overview of the epistemology of cultural competence broadly as it applies to social work; as she states, "Cultural competence is a high priority in social work, but it is not conceptualized in a way that can effectively guide practice" (p. 209). She also asserts, "We find ourselves at a point where we have an impressive armamentarium of strategies for multicultural practice but we need coherent ways of describing the rationale underlying their use" (p. 218).

In light of the continuing theoretical debates and challenges about the conceptualization of cultural competence, Ortiz & Jani (2010, p. 175) contend "it is widely accepted that social work education has not found its stride when it comes to teaching diversity in social work programs". A different place of reference, a fresh perspective, using methodology appropriate to understanding the essential qualitative components of engaging diversity and difference in practice is needed. Qualitative methods, specifically, phenomenological research methods provide an appropriate frame for examining engaging diversity and difference in practice from an experiential perspective.

**Phenomenology.** Phenomenological research methods are concerned with the notion of *verstehen*, or understanding. This quest toward understanding is grounded in a human interpretation of the data of experience. It requires examining phenomena, in this case, what and how cultural competence manifests, from many sides to get a vision of its essence (Moustakas, 1994).

Social work faculty play an immensely important role as gatekeepers to the social work profession. They are charged with assessing and, to some degree certifying, that students have meet the basic standards required by social work education, including that of cultural competency. In essence, students have acquired cultural competence when faculty determine that they have. Social work faculty occupy privileged positions of observation and facilitation while engaging with students in their roles as instructors and evaluators in classes where students are charged with discussing, synthesizing, and demonstrating the integration of social work knowledge, values, and practice skills. Faculty are therefore exceptionally well suited to address the issue of the conceptualization of cultural competence based on their lived experience in working with students to help them achieve cultural competence. The research question posed for this study is as follows: How do social work faculty members' experience student attainment of effective engagement with people who are different from them? This question provides for a unique exploration of the phenomenological aspects of students' attainment of cultural competency.

## Methodology

A hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm guided the study design. Phenomenological research is used to describe the meaning individuals attach to their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (Creswell, 2007, p. 57; Laverty, 2003) described hermeneutic phenomenology as a process that seeks to bring understanding and disclosure of phenomena through interpretation and language. Hermeneutic phenomenology requires the researcher to engage in a process of self-reflection but does not support bracketing or setting aside the researcher's biases and assumptions. Rather, hermeneutic phenomenology embeds the researcher's experience and assumptions and holds them essential to the interpretive process. As a result, the researcher is called upon to create an environment of co-creation with study participants and to pay close attention to their own experience. The researcher is expected to explicitly claim the ways their experience relates to the issues being researched. Additionally, hermeneutic phenomenology involves selecting participants who have lived experience of the study's focus.

### Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was used. The researcher reviewed the teaching history of social work faculty at a large university in the southern United States as posted on the faculty directory web page. Criteria for recruitment was: (1) Faculty who served as field liaisons and served as instructors for the integrative field practicum course; (2) Faculty with more than five years in the field liaison role. Faculty who served as field liaisons

and as instructors for the integrative field practicum course were selected based on their role in assessing student outcomes in classroom and settings. The minimum of five years of experience was employed to ensure that participants had multiple experiences to reflect upon. Ten faculty were identified as possible participants based on those criteria. From this pool, five faculty were identified to ensure that participants represented a diverse range of experience in different practice settings, previous clinical population focus, and current field education roles. The five faculty were contacted through their university e-mail addresses and invited to participate in the study. An initial e-mail explained my personal connection to the research question, the purpose of the study, and why they were being asked to participate. Recipients were asked to call or e-mail me to set a time for reviewing the consent forms and engaging in the interview if they choose to participate. All five faculty contacted agreed to participate. Only four faculty subsequently participated in the study because of scheduling difficulties with one individual.

The participants, all women, ranged in age from mid-30's to mid-50's. Three identified as white and one identified as a woman of color. Teaching experience ranged from nine to 18 years. All participants' highest degree was a master's in social work. Three participants received their master's degree from the university where they currently work. Participant characteristics were representative of the large university in the south where the study took place.

## Data Collection

An interview guide with two specific interview questions and additional prompts was developed to assist in data collection (see Supplemental Data C). The interview guide and questions were designed to be consistent with phenomenological methods and to elicit conversation related to the research question. Questions were designed to be relatively general to allow participants to more fully express their experiences. The interview guide was reviewed and revised after consultation with a qualitative research instructor and colleague who has experience and expertise in phenomenological research methods. The initial questions were: (1) What were the tangible and intangible elements that allow social work students to effectively engage with people who are not like them or who are members of an oppressed population? and (2) How do we know when students have the ability to effectively engage with people who are not like them or who are members of an oppressed population?

The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board approved the study. Interviews took place in participants' offices. Participants reviewed the consent form and were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study before signing to indicate their understanding and agreement to participate. Throughout the recruitment and data collection process a collaborative approach was utilized in relationship with the participants. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Throughout the data collection process, I maintained a research journal and wrote field notes after completing each interview to record my observations, intentions,

reactions, and thought development as the study progressed. My qualitative research instructor and colleague reviewed some of the recordings and consulted with me at each step of the data collection process.

**Data analysis.** Transcripts were analyzed after all interviews were completed and transcribed. Initial analysis consisted of multiple readings of each transcript with memo writing after each reading. Coding began with open coding and identification of meaning units. Meaning units for each transcript were then clustered and analyzed together to arrive at themes. Cut and paste methods were used to organize data for analysis. At each level of coding and analysis I cross-checked my interpretations with the original transcripts in an attempt to maintain closeness to the participants' interpretations in the data (Morrow, 2005).

**Researcher bias, study rigor.** One requirement of phenomenological research is that researchers "discover a topic and question rooted in autobiographical meanings and values as well as social meanings and significance" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 103). The topic of cultural competence has this autobiographical meaning for me. My work in community settings with oppressed populations for more than 25 years, my work as a field instructor for more than 15 students, and my experiences on the other side of the desk as a black, lesbian, working-class woman led me to explore this topic. I carried with me a desire to complete a study that would have social meaning and significance. Over the course of the study, I discovered my strong desire for participants to like and respect me. Additionally, I came to this study with pre-conceived beliefs about the topic that included: (1) cultural competence as currently conceptualized and operationalized in

curriculum that was familiar to me was incomplete and not as effective as it could be; (2) that social work faculty know more about the topic than is currently reflected in the literature; (3) there is something different about cultural competency as compared to generic clinical or social work skills. One challenge was to use my experience and desire for connection with the participants to create a collaborative relationship and recognize significant concepts, while simultaneously being aware of how my insights, beliefs, and experiences might bias data collection and analysis. I had to employ a systematic vigilance to assure that I stayed very close to the participants' interpretations. This study included techniques to promote trustworthiness. Specific attention was given to each component of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Morrow, 2005).

I used three strategies to promote trustworthiness: **(1)** Persistent immersion: I continued interviews until saturation with each participant occurred, engaged in multiple readings of the transcribed interviews, cross checked transcripts at each stage of the analysis, and spent clusters of hours within consecutive days analyzing and immersing myself in the data. **(2)** Triangulation: I reviewed text books, articles, syllabi, and social work program manuals for confirming and discriminating data. **(3)** Reflexivity: I journaled during each phase of the study, wrote and referred to field notes and analytic memos, and shared my concerns, fears, and revelations with a colleague and a qualitative research class instructor. I received consultation and feedback from this instructor at each phase of the study.

One of the strategies I used to disempower my understanding of cultural competency was to assign it a placeholder of It. I did this both to help remove for participants the constraints of current conceptions of cultural competence as well as my own beliefs about it. In the body of this article, It, cultural competence, and engaging diversity and difference in practice are used interchangeably.

**Results**

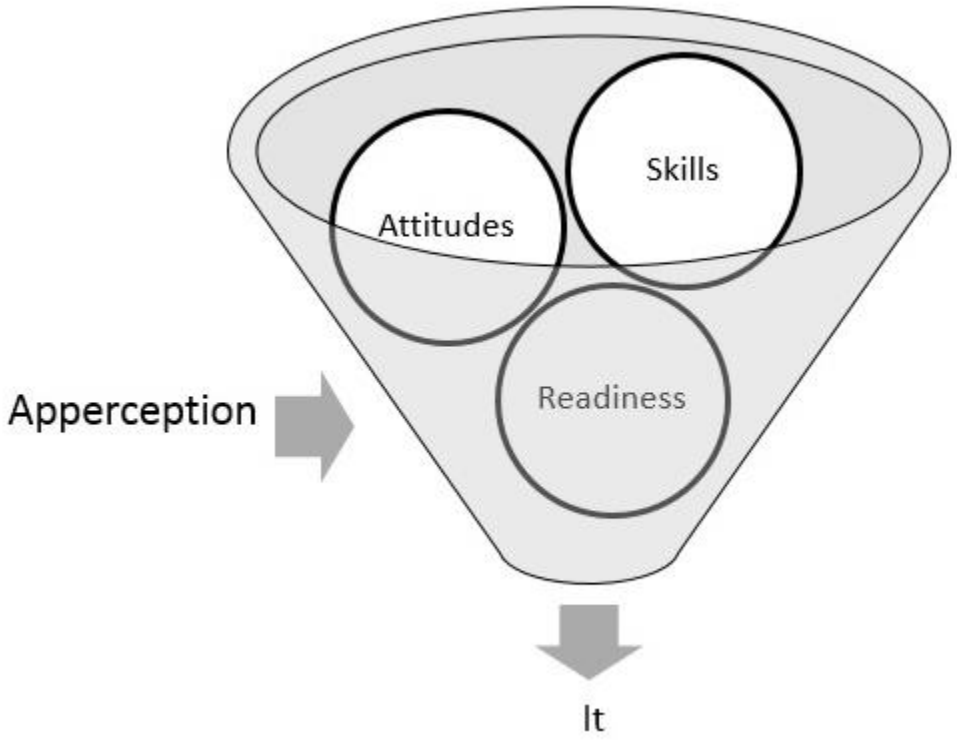
Data analysis generated four major categories. The first category, What It is, described themes related to participants' experience of student attainment of the ability to effectively engage with people who are not like them or who are members of oppressed populations. The remaining three categories describe participants insights about: their general assessment of whether students are becoming competent; how faculty are impacted by whether students become competent and their own development of competency; and how the curriculum contributes or fails to contribute to helping students to become competent. The categories are labeled: They are getting It; Faculty and It; and the Curriculum and It.

**What It is**

Participants describe It as a generative, interrelated, cyclical, complex process rather than a state of accomplishment or attainment. One participant described this as selective. "It's not like you….get it or not get it….you can get it in some ways and not get it." Another participant highlighted the understanding that to get It takes time and effort. "This tangible, intangible process that you can't learn online. You can't learn short term. You can't learn in a summer class. You're just gonna have to take some time to dig

in." Three elements emerged from the data related to this theme: attitudes, skills, and readiness (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Category 1: What It is**




**Attitudes and Skills.** The first two elements, skills and attitudes, correspond to common conceptualizations of cultural competence (Kumus-Tan, Beagan, Loppie, MacLeod, & Frank, 2007). Skills was reflected upon broadly without delineation between clinical skills, social work skills, or skills related to cultural competence. Participants emphasized listening skills as most important or necessary for cultural competence. Skills for repairing breaches in engagement were described in exception as a distinct skill related to participants' experience of what It is. Participants also described enhancement of basic social work or clinical skills as being important to cultural competence but went

further to indicate that skill alone is not sufficient for cultural competence. One participant highlighted this when saying, "Certainly there are frameworks and there's skills and there's steps to demonstrate what a skill can and should look like but underneath that is use of self." "Use of self" was a term participants used in different ways, sometimes, as in this case, as a proxy for cultural competence. Participants clearly describe It as something transcending skill.

Skills for repairing breaches in engagement were described as an essential element of It. As one participant said, "The reparative stuff is huge...you're gonna make mistakes. The important thing is that you go back and you make repairs." She also said,

> …you go back and you repair. Not just offer an apology but again interact. Do what you can to fix it and move forward, otherwise, it stays in a stuck place. It's one of the things that I talk to my students about in class. I say hopefully in this class somebody here is gonna offend somebody else. Hopefully we are gonna have conversations that are real enough for that to happen.

Participants described attitudes and characteristics that create a foundation for becoming an effective clinician or social worker and that are required for culturally competent practice. Curiosity, openness, and knowledge-seeking were the attitudes identified as essential. Other attitudes participants described included flexibility, patience, creativity, motivation, respect, and honesty. Mary stated,

> I think that [students have] to take a step down this journey that we call cultural competence and [they] have to be motivated and [they] have to be honest….genuinely curious about the experiences of others and motivated to learn

and seek out information about the experience of the other and open to opportunities in the environment to examine and to learn.

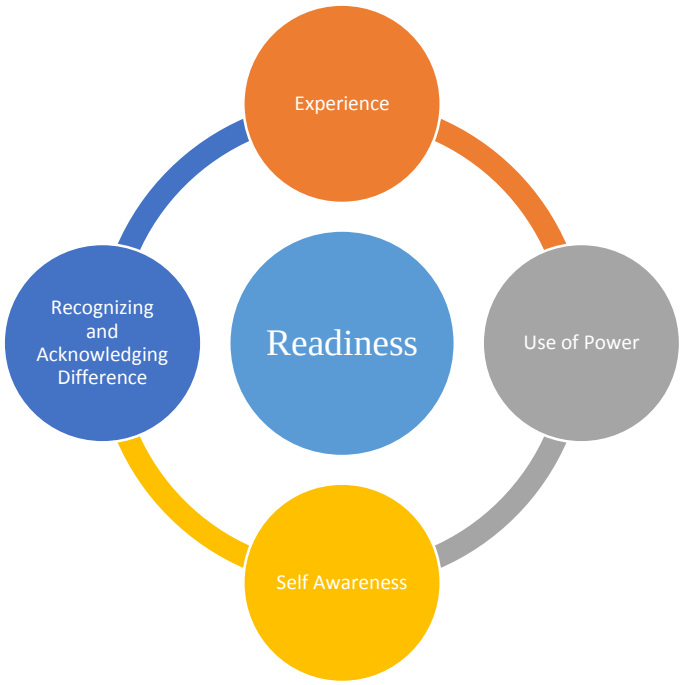
Consistent with Van Den Bergh and Crisp (2004), all participants referred to factual knowledge, commonly in conjunction with attitudes and skills, in conceptualizing cultural competence. However, neither the frequency of articulation nor the emphasis given to having factual knowledge indicated that it was an essential element; rather, knowledge-seeking as an attitude was described as essential. One participant described it this way: "They just take it in. And when you see that, whether it's about cultural competency or whether it's about assessment skills or intervention planning, when you see somebody who just has that above everything, I really feel confident about them."

Beyond these attitudes, which create a foundation for clinicians and social workers, attitudes of risk-taking and courage were described as essential in participants' experience of students' cultural competency. These attitudes were reflected as important tools for increasing skill and gaining knowledge and experience. They were also closely associated with reparative skills because the expectation was that risk-taking and courage would result in missteps and misunderstandings.

> So that was one time that I remember where I thought, ok she's starting to get it…..it was around taking a risk in a group. She understood that she needed to take that risk in that group and it was, I thought, it was very brave of her. Very courageous. So, I could see that she was thinking that in order for me to grow, in order for me to learn more, I have to put my own crap out there. And that was really scary for her to do that."

**Readiness.** Readiness was described as some combination of skills, knowledge, and attitudes with the addition of: (1) experience, (2) self-awareness (3) analysis and use of power, and (4) recognizing and acknowledging difference (see Figure 7). Readiness was described as both a condition and a process. Participants perceived readiness as both an end related to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes, self-awareness, and apperception and a means to each of them. These elements were described as interrelated, interdependent, and symbiotic. Participants expressed a belief that understanding helps to generate new understanding: "Around readiness….how do you….help them [students] be more ready, more open to listening to others, to learning form their own experience, to searching their own backgrounds." Participants consistently articulated a notion of their experience of readiness as an essential precursor of growth in cultural competency. An example was: "It's like that same student who might be struggling right now maybe if they were here five years from now wouldn't have the same struggle."

Figure 7. Elements of Readiness




**Experience.** Experience was believed to be essential to getting It. Participants identified experience as related to life experiences, experiences of oppression, observation or immersion in experiences outside of one's own culture, and experiences using creative expression as important to this element. As participants expressed, experience includes exposure and practice. Although age was not reflected negatively or positively with regard to experience, several participants acknowledged age as a factor related to how much experience students bring to the program.

> [It's] not so much about age. Although you could have a bias that the older you are, the more experiences you have, the more ready you are to do some or this work. …I mean that is certainly true. I've seen a lot of students who come in now-a-days [who] are older than average…and it's amazing what they bring to the table. But I've had some 21-year- olds that have walked in that knock my socks

off, you know, with their level of insight and awareness of themselves. And they've done…their work or they have been exposed and given permission in growing up to be curious and honorable about differences.

Participants highlighted self-knowledge or self-awareness as necessary to getting It.

Lack of self-knowledge or awareness was related to barriers to building relationships and inappropriate boundaries. Self-awareness was sometimes communicated functionally as use of self. A participant described the connection of self-awareness and readiness as, "readiness comes in part from your acceptance of who you are." One participant made a deliberate delineation between self-awareness and self-assurance. She saw self-awareness as an indicator that a student was on the road to cultural competency and self-assurance as an indicator that the student needs to make more progress. She asserted, "They don't seem to be on the path just yet. I think one of the things that tells me that is kind of like a self-assurance in their comments or in their writing that doesn't …leave any space for doubt." She talked about a particular student saying, "He was headed in the right direction but he needed to expand his awareness more about his own gender…Cause he said some other things that indicated to me that he doesn't understand the power [he has]."

**Self-awareness and power.** The concepts of power and self-awareness were described as closely related. The description of power participants articulated included their perception that students' awareness of their own power was important as is their awareness of the power of others.

> An awareness of power and intention around power is really important in the whole getting it thing. You have to know what you bring and power is an important part of that. Perceived power and real power. You have to recognize the power of the person sitting in front of you.

Participants also indicated that avoiding power or seeking power negatively impacted students' getting It.

> Some students are afraid of the power…they are so afraid they might make a mistake with that power that it sort of paralyses them… some that want all the power they can possibly get and some that are so afraid of it they don't want to have it.

**Recognizing and acknowledging difference.** Recognizing and acknowledging difference was seen as extremely important to participants in the process of getting It. Participants identified that recognizing difference when there appears to be similarities is important. The participant who identified as a woman of color explains that not recognizing difference can create limitations. She explained:

> Cause I can think about between you and me, I can think, we are both people of color, we are both women, we are both older. I can see your grey hair. I don't know what your age is but…your experience as a woman of color that's older is gonna be different than my own experience. I am likely to have a sense of affinity with you because I see the similarities and that'll take us just so far…I need to figure out more of who you are and let you see more of [who I am].

Another participant spoke about how this identification with someone who looks like them can cause students to negatively judge someone.

> Student workers dealing with clients can sometimes think they know everything because the person across the table from them looks like them or has a similar background to them and so they just assume that they know some things without being curious about it, without being open to it. I've also seen shame that this person is representing my people and look what they're doing. I see more judgment. It's interesting to see the in-group ways that people don't get it as well.

Recognizing difference was seen as a tool for understanding and knowledge of self and others. "Sometimes seeing somebody's difference helps you see. I mean, it's that contrast that makes things clearer. Makes you see them better." Participants noted that they regularly experience students not acknowledging difference. One participant related her experience.

> I will ask them [students] to do a process recording and. I get no identifying information in terms of age, gender, ethnicity as a starting point…So, I mean, who knows what's going on but it does occur to me that, do they not see the difference? You know do they not notice that there is a difference? They must. I think why it's not working is because the differences are not acknowledged. I can't imagine that the client doesn't notice, but the client is in the powerless position…so they are not likely to raise it.

This participant went on to say, "I wonder if they regard it as unmentionable because that would mean that they are thinking about race differences and that maybe that would

mean they are racist...some of them were thinking that. They just didn't want to be the ones to say." The issue of acknowledging difference highlights a paradox that acknowledging difference might be perceived as not getting It, while not acknowledging difference means not getting It.

**Apperception.** Apperception, a psychological process of making meaning and contextualizing, which results in discernment or judgment (Colman, 2008) fits the descriptions of participants of an intangible and inexplicable element of It which determines what and how students integrate their life experiences, educational content, and educational experiences to produce cultural competence. The participants described this individualized internal process as the essential element that determined the degree to which students acquire or demonstrate cultural competence. One participant told a story of two Latina students who were very activist in their orientation, but upon going to a workshop "their eyes were totally opened around issues of sexism." The participants stated that, "they understood a lot about themselves in terms of their race and ethnicity but they hadn't really thought about it or made parallels to their gender." She continued, "I realized, oh, ok, this is like another step down maybe a slightly different road." Participants described this psychological process as a catalyst that worked to help students translate and integrate conceptual elements into practical strategies for engagement.

One participant stated, "Translate, translate, and integrate. And also:

> It's really difficult to be able to determine exactly what it is that makes some students able and other students not able to. I think it has to do with how they

were brought up and …what they bring to the table, so to speak. All the experiences they have had in their lives before and how they process all that. You know it's like when they do put their foot in it, so to speak, are they able to process that and really come to an understanding of what happened and how to do it differently next time.

**They are getting It.**

Although participants believed that most students are on the path to It before they leave the social work education program, they also believed that they could not predict which students were going to be successful, and they were not always right in their assessment. Participants experience students being on the road to getting It as satisfying, but their sense of accomplishment does not depend on it.

So, I think when I have students who get it at least at any level, it's fulfilling, you know, and I feel hopeful that they will continue…but I don't take it on as a reflection of my personal effectiveness. I plant some seeds. Sometimes they grow, sometimes they don't.

Although, participants said it was rare for them to experience a student who was not on the road to getting It, these occurrences held great meaning for them. Sadness is the emotional response participants experienced when students were not on the road to getting It. Participants describe the nature of trying to understand why some students get It and others don't as "it's like peeling back an onion." This illustrates both the illusiveness of understanding and the emotional content for them related to students who aren't on the road to getting It.

**Faculty and It**

Participants believe that as faculty they have important roles in helping students get on the road to getting It:

> I understand that I can facilitate and that I have a significant influence on students' performance, so I try to give them the benefit of my, you know, knowledge, my experience, but…I can say there's the road but … they're not always gonna see it.

The roles participants describe are assistive roles and gatekeeping roles. Participants see themselves as helping students through teaching and modeling. They believe that assessment and feedback are essential elements of helping students on the road to It and as part of their gatekeeping role. They also believe that their gatekeeping role is beneficial to students as well as a professional responsibility.

> My perspective is that we have students who have problems, who are not matched, who this isn't the right field for them or they are not ready or they are not capable, which is unfortunate, but true sometimes…You gotta call that. You don't let people go out and do [social work]. That's just not setting anybody up for anything good, their clients or themselves in the long run.

Participants believe that generally faculty members need more opportunities to talk about It and their experience of students being on the road to getting It. They believe that their process and student's process of getting It are parallel, "I only teach because I learn." They also believe that faculty members do not attend well to their own process.

Participants worried about how they were doing personally related to getting It, and they wondered how they were doing in helping students' process of getting It.

> If we want our students to have personally illuminating, transforming conversations with one another, then we need to have the courage, the willingness, to risk having those conversations with one another. And we don't do that. We don't do that. We're too scared. I don't know what that is. Yeah I'm a little scared, too, to put my own crap out there. But I think that's kinda what it takes in this area of cultural competence. I think that's what it takes to help us each grow in our own.

**The curriculum and It**

Participants also saw the social work school curriculum components such as field education and practicum classes as opportunities for acquiring skills and knowledge or adopting different attitudes. Beyond that, they saw the curriculum as an opportunity for students to get exposure to difference, practice, and becoming aware of and perhaps revising how they make meaning. Consequently, they saw assignments or classes highlighting diverse identities or culture, role-playing and simulations, and the field placement and as important curriculum components. They also highly valued volunteering and community engagement and the role of discourse in the curriculum. Participants believe that the curriculum does not have enough coursework specifically related to It, that the integration of cultural competency in the curriculum is inconsistent, and that the class specifically designed to teach cultural competency is taught inconsistently depending on who teaches it. Participants place high value on the field

placement experience in the process of acquiring It and also as a structural component of assessing It.

## Discussion

One important outcome of this study is the participants' beliefs that though knowledge, skills, and attitude were basic to cultural competency, these elements did not fully describe the ability to engage diversity and difference in practice. Perhaps the most important outcome of this study is the notion of readiness—the idea that there is some state of readiness and some process that creates the opportunity for cultural competency growth. This state of readiness does not contradict current conceptualizations of cultural competence, but it does introduce a question of how to create a state of readiness. The study also calls attention to apperception, which seems integral to both the process and the state of readiness participants articulated as being necessary to the process of cultural competency. Understanding and impacting individual processes that students use to make meaning of new ideas, people, situations as influenced by past experiences, ideas, memories, and values is not overtly considered in the literature about cultural competence, nor is it an overt objective in social work educations standards (CSWE, 2008). This idea that individual psychological process is a critical element to cultural competency leads to questions about how social work curriculum enhances this psychological process.

Also, of particular importance is the emergence of recognizing and acknowledging difference as an essential element of cultural competency. Participants' experience with students and their own experience with the avoidance of identifying and

acknowledging difference are surprising. Given the emphasis on diversity in the NASW code of ethics and the CSWE (2008) standards, one might expect that there would be increased comfort and skill in identifying and acknowledging difference. As one participant stated, "I think in that one class it gets named all over the place. But I wonder if maybe it's just in that class and the rest of us don't do a consistently good enough job around raising the…dynamics of difference and infusing that into our policy class or [wherever]."

Participants expressed a belief that seeing most of their students on the road to engaging diversity and difference in practice provides some confirmation that the process is working. This could mean that readiness needs are being achieved and/or the existing curriculum is working.

One finding of this study is participants' expressed desire and perceived need for faculty to engage in conversations about engaging diversity and difference in practice as a tool for advancing their own capacity to engage diversity and difference in practice. Participants' expressions of concern about their own contributions to students' process indicate that feedback from other faculty might be appropriate. Current sources of feedback such as course evaluations do not seem to provide the qualitative information needed to feel confident in their progress in helping students grow or to make progress themselves in this area. Another finding related to this is the belief of participants that the curriculum does not consistently address engaging diversity and difference in practice. The curriculum in the program where the study took place has a single course which is

widely expected to provide content grounding in cultural competency. Integration is expected in other courses.

**Limitations**

Although, I employed multiple strategies to increase the trustworthiness of the study, there remained several important limitations. Participants may have shared common biases because of the insular nature of the profession, sharing a work environment, and sharing similar characteristics related to age, race, gender, and education. There were little difference in their ages, and all but one of the participants is white. This potential for shared bias could skew responses and limit the effectiveness of the triangulation utilizing available documents.

This study would have benefited from a larger number of data sources including more participants, more documents, and more consultation with experts. These would have increased the transferability of the findings. Additionally, the study is limited in its transferability because participants were employed at a single university where the student body is largely white. Consequently, it cannot be clear how transferable the findings are to other settings. The lived experience of the faculty participants of this study related to student getting It may be very different from the experience of faculty at other universities.

**Implications and Conclusions**

The concept of readiness has implications related to admissions policies and criteria, curriculum content, and individual student development. Further qualitative research is necessary to continue to elucidate the concept of readiness. Additionally, the

process of acquiring or growth in cultural competency is important to examine. A future study using grounded theory methodology would be ideal to uncover this process. The notion of apperception creates questions about how to impact the way people make meaning to enhance the development of cultural competence.

The paradox of the idea that to mention difference might be perceived as not getting It, while in the participants' experience acknowledging difference is important to getting It, should be explored and specific teaching techniques might be developed to encourage students to acknowledge difference in appropriate ways. This would also require creating an environment where the acknowledgement of difference is encouraged, acceptable, and even desirable.

Other implications include that it would be useful to design and implement mechanisms for feedback, support, and/or discussion to facilitate faculty growth in cultural competence. Further, consideration of curriculum structure related to cultural competency to determine if there are ways to ensure consistency in the coursework and integration across a variety of classes, and/or to determine if there are more effective curriculum structures altogether is needed.

This article responds to the lack of empirical research on social work student outcomes. Clearly, from study participants' perspectives, this important and complex topic with its interrelated, symbiotic components can only be understood in its totality through gaining an understanding of the process as it is lived. This study is another step toward understanding engaging diversity and difference in practice.

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**Supplemental Data: C**

Interview Guide

**Research Question**: How do social work faculty experience student attainment of the ability to effectively engage with people who are not like them or who are members of oppressed populations?

**Qualitative Approach:** Phenomenology

**Primary Questions:**

1. What are the tangible and intangible elements that allow social work students to effectively engage with people who are not like them or who are members of oppressed populations?
2. How do we know when MSW and BSW have attained the ability to effectively engage with people who are not like them or who are members of oppressed populations?

Interview Probes:

1. Tell me about a student that you taught or worked with who learned to effectively engage with people who are not like them.
2. What must a student **learn** to be able to effectively engage with people not like them?
3. Can you predict who is going to engage well? How?
4. How would you fill in this blank? Students who **are**_____ are more likely to engage effectively.
5. How would you fill in this blank? Students who **experience** _____are more likely to engage effectively.
6. Do different teaching tools seem to make a difference in how well students learn to engage effectively? If yes, how? If no, why not?

7. Are you able to predict when a student is not going to do well in learning to engage? How?
8. What are the characteristics of students who are most likely **not** to learn to engage effectively with people who are not like them?
9. If you could, what would you change (curriculum, student characteristic, teaching, policy, circumstances etc.) that would improve student outcomes in effectively engaging with people who are not like them?
10. Are there differences in the depth of getting it, ie. Superficially getting it vs a deep getting it? If so describe your experience of the difference.
11. What do you think about the task of evaluating student's ability to engage effectively?
12. How is it for you when a student gets it? What about when they don't?
13. What other elements make a difference to a student's ability to effectively engage with others who are not like them?
14. Are there other things that are important to think about related to a student's ability to effectively engage with others who are not like them?

# Chapter 4: .A Concept Mapping: Social Work Students' Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice


## Abstract

This article reports the findings of a study of social work faculty and field instructors' conceptualization of students' demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice. Concept Mapping was used to generate a ten-cluster visual map representation containing 47 statements describing the concept. Comparisons faculty with field liaison responsibilities, faculty without field liaison responsibilities, and field instructor's average ratings of thematic categories and individual elements on importance, ease of assessment, and how adequately each are assessed are presented. Findings include that faculty without liaison responsibilities and field instructors, rate thematic categories and individual elements more similarly to faculty without liaison responsibilities than to each other suggesting that faculty with liaison responsibility serve an important bridging role for student demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice.


## Background

### Engaging Diversity and Difference as a Core Competency

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) governs social work education curriculum and practice at the baccalaureate and master's levels by establishing and ensuring compliance with the Educational Policy and Standards (EPAS). EPAS sets the minimum requirements for colleges and universities in the United States to be accredited in social work education (CSWE, 2008). EPAS utilizes a competency-based approach by

establishing ten core competencies for graduating students. The goal of the outcome approach is to ensure demonstration of the integration and application of the competencies in practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Student outcomes on the core competencies are the primary measure of an effective social work education.

The ten core competencies in the CSWE EPAS are the "measurable practice behaviors comprised of knowledge, values and skills" (CSWE, 2008 p. 3). Compliance with these core competencies is the outcome of significance for curriculum design in compliance with the EPAS for accreditation. There is an expectation that mastery of the core competencies will prepare BSW students for generalist practice and that mastery of the core competencies and specific practice behaviors specific to a concentration will prepare MSW students for advanced practice.

Social workers are required to engage with diverse people, communities, and populations. Social work education is charged to teach students and provide opportunity to develop and demonstrate competency across multiple dimensions of diversity including "age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, political ideology, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation" (CSWE, 2008 p. 5). The need for social workers to be competent across diversity is almost indisputable in relationship to social work values and ethics (NASW, 2008). The core competency "to engage diversity and difference in practice" has four broad and relatively abstract associated practice behaviors:

> Recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create or enhance privilege and power; gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups; recognize and communicate their understanding of the importance of difference in shaping life experiences; and view themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants. (CSWE, 2008 p. 5)

**Current Challenges associated with engaging diversity and difference**

A challenge inherent to the competency-based approach is determining how social work curriculum assures that the practice behaviors are achieved. Additionally, social work educators struggle to determine what methods of assessment are effective for measuring achievement. On one hand, the practice behaviors outlined in EPAS allow considerable flexibility to social work programs; on the other hand, they provide little guidance in conceptualizing and assessing curriculum. Jani, Ortiz, Pierce, and Sowbel (2011) assert that changes to EPAS over the years "inevitably and unintentionally made it subject to different interpretations and have created an understandable level of confusion among social work educators" (p. 298). This confusion manifests in difficulty teaching and assessing students relative to engaging diversity and difference in practice. Jani et al. also contend that the changes reflected in the most current version of EPAS illustrate a positive shift toward a postmodern approach to diversity and difference but that movement needs to be accompanied by revised methods of assessing students' ability to engage diversity and difference in practice.

Cultural competency is the primary framework used for designing curriculum to help students achieve the engaging difference and diversity competency. However, there is a lack of literature that analyzes the relationship between cultural competence and engaging difference and diversity. It is, in fact, relatively impossible to evaluate the relationship of the concepts until engaging difference and diversity in practice is clearly defined. Additionally, a clear understanding of the what constitutes the demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice, the difficulty of assessing it, and the extent to which students' ability to engage diversity and difference in practice is assessed is needed.

**The structure of social work education**

Bogo and Vayda (1998) conceptualize the context of social work education as having two primary worlds, the school of social work and field education. They indicate that there is collaborative interaction and responsibilities of both worlds and the actors in those worlds (e.g. students, faculty, and field instructors). The EPAS (CSWE 2008) describe the relationship of social work education settings as follows: "it is a basic precept of social work education that the two interrelated components of curriculum—classroom and field —are of equal importance within the curriculum, and each contributes to the development of the requisite competencies of professional practice" (p. 8). The function and importance of the social work program as a site for formal education consisting of curriculum and courses and its relationship to assessing students' acquisition of the core competencies is relatively clear. For example, in the classroom, students can be tested on concepts directly from the core competencies through means

such as multiple choice tests or role-plays. The relationship of field education to the core competencies is less clear but especially important in determining whether students can apply these competencies in real practice settings with real clients (individuals, families, groups, organizations or larger social and political systems).

**Field education.** Field education, sometimes called field practicum, field instruction, or field placement is the required practice of situating students in a real-world social work setting for a specified period of time with specific educational goals (EPAS, 2008). Students and alumnae consider field education an indispensable component of their education for social work practice (Bogo, 2010, p. 11; Kadushin, 1991, p. 11). CSWE (2008) has emphasized field education's importance by designating it social work education's "signature pedagogy" and characterizing it as the site where theory and practice are integrated.

CSWE EPAS only partly dictates the content of field education. Theoretically speaking, schools of social work determine the content of field instruction through developing learning objectives or performance criteria (Bogo and Vayda, 1998, p. 44), but in practice the content of field education specifically related to the field agency's work objectives. Caspi and Reid (2012) describe the field agency's influence on the content of field instruction and caution that, "Indeed, it is largely unknown whether or not field interns are actively working toward and achieving educational objectives—although it is commonly accepted that this is occurring" (p. 35). This has major implications related to whether faculty, field instructors, and students have similar perspectives of

engaging diversity and difference in practice and whether each element of this competency is assessed in the classroom and in the field.

**The role of field instructors and classroom faculty.** While field instructors, field faculty (faculty with liaison responsibilities), and faculty without liaison responsibilities have differing roles, they all occupy a privileged position of observation and facilitation of student demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice. Each engages with students in the role of instructor and evaluator where students are charged with discussing, synthesizing, and demonstrating the integration of social work knowledge, skills and values. Faculty and field instructors serve as gatekeepers through their role as assessors who have the power to determine whether students have meet the basic standards for a social work degree. Additionally, from a constructivist point of view through their role in assessment these faculty and field instructors determine the meaning of the demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice. In essence, students have demonstrated engaging diversity and difference in practice when these faculty and field instructors say they have. Consequently, those serving in these roles are exceptionally well situated by virtue of their role to address the issue of the conceptualization of cultural competence based on their lived experience.

Social work faculty members are primarily responsible for student learning in the classroom and in assigned community-based service learning. Faculty often teach a range of courses with different content and are often expected to include diversity content regardless of the course's primary focus. They are likely to have many other responsibilities in addition to teaching and may be relatively disconnected to field

education except when they serve as field faculty in a liaison role. The name used and the roles vary, but all programs appoint a faculty-based individual, often called a field liaison, to facilitate the connection and integration between students' learning in the two settings. Field faculty may or may not conduct routine visits to field placement sites or serve in a trouble-shooting role. Field faculty roles are, in many programs, mostly carried out by part-time staff or by full-time faculty with teaching responsibilities in addition to their teaching, research, and service work.

Field instructors are agency-based social workers who play an important role because they are students' primary instructor during the field practicum and ensure that students' learning objectives are met. They may also coordinate student experiences in the field setting and evaluate student learning and performance. They are generally responsible for attending to the administrative requirements such as assuring that students have completed the required number of hours of the field placement (Bogo, 2010, p. 15).

Clearly each of these actors plays an important play in conceptualizing and assessing students' engaging diversity and difference in practice. The degree to which there are similarities and differences in conceptualization, perception of importance of the elements, and which elements they assess may be important in determining whether there is a consistent understanding of the meaning of the construct and whether some elements should be singularly assessed in the classroom or the field.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

Social work educators still struggle to define, identify, and assess the qualitative aspects of engaging diversity and difference in practice. There is a clear need to better

understand how social work faculty and field instructors conceptualize student's achievements around the engaging diversity and difference core competency. Examining this issue from the perspective of those charged with teaching engagement with diversity and difference and assessing students' performance is essential to truly understanding how this core competency is operationalized in social work education practice. Therefore, this study examined conceptualizations of students' demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in the classroom, in social settings, and in practice from the perspective of social work faculty and field instructors. To that end, the primary research questions are:

1. How do social work faculty and field instructors conceptualize and assess student's engaging diversity and difference in practice?
2. How do faculty and field instructors' conceptualizations of student's engaging diversity and difference in practice differ based on role?

## Methods

Examining the meaning of engaging diversity and difference requires a latent analysis that is best achieved through qualitative methods. Yet, it is also important to quantify and rate the relative importance of the qualitative elements and to evaluate the overall validity of findings relative to participant characteristics, both of which require quantitative analyses. As a mixed-methods approach, concept mapping is an excellent match for these needs.

### Concept mapping.

. Trochim (1989) developed concept mapping to generate and translate complex qualitative data into visual depictions, or maps, of concepts through multivariate

statistical techniques including multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis. These maps display interrelationships of the elements of conceptual meaning from stakeholders' perspectives. Pattern matching then allows for comparing the degree to which two concepts agree or disagree within the particular context of interest. Concept mapping uses a participatory approach to design, data generation, analysis, and interpretation, meaning that research participants influence each step. Concept mapping has been used for planning and evaluation, in social work, and specifically for studying the concept of cultural competency (Davis, Salzburg, & Locke, 2010; Davis, 2009; Streeter, Franklin, Kim & Tripodi, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Poole, Duvall, &Wofford 2006).

In the current study, a web-based program to collect brainstorming statements about how students demonstrate competency in engaging with diversity and difference from social work faculty and field instructors was used. The statements were generated in response to a focus prompt. These ideas were then reduced and sent to an additional pool of participants to be sorted into conceptual categories and rated. The resulting data were mapped, and stakeholders reviewed the map and provided input for arrangement into a conceptual framework. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample and examine differences between groups. Concept mapping analysis and results were conducted using The Concept System® software.

To limit the study's scope and ensure that the concept had a crisp focus, the practice element of focus was practice with individuals. The Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas at Austin reviewed and approved this research project.

## Procedures

The study was conducted in six phases, which parallel the six stage process of concept mapping methodology: planning and design, idea generation, sorting, rating, data analysis, interpretation and implementation.

**Phase 1: Planning and design of the web-based data collection tool.** In this first phase, the researcher with input from stakeholders and experts designed the focus prompt that would be used to help participants generate conceptual statements related to the engaging diversity and difference construct, selected the comparison criteria, and readied the Web-based survey tool. Stakeholder involvement in this phase included multiple discussions with social work faculty to inform the study design. A concept mapping expert provided multiple consultations to inform the content and design of this study. Additionally, 20 social work educators participated in a discussion and provided input to the study's conceptual design. Six seasoned social work educators and the expert in concept mapping were consulted for feedback and assistance in crafting and validating the focus prompt.

**Phase 2: Idea generation.** Participants were recruited through email solicitation directed to social work programs' BSW, MSW, and field directors. Directors were asked to forward a recruitment email to faculty and field directors. As Kane and Trochim (2007) recommend, a random stratified recruitment method was used to promote diversity of the participant pool. Schools listed in the CSWE directory of accredited programs were stratified to reflect those The White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (2014) identified as HBCUs and those the U.S

Department of Education (USDE, 2014) identified as being Hispanic Serving Institutions; all remaining institutions were classified together.

In the first wave of idea generation recruitment, four randomly selected schools in each category were contacted using email contacts from the CSWE list of accredited programs and from program websites. After one week, when the target number of participants for this phase had not been reached, a second wave of idea generation recruitment emails was sent. In this wave, the 12 schools previously contacted received follow-up emails and an additional 20 schools were randomly selected and sent recruitment emails.

Participants accessed Concept Systems Global MAX™ software program for online data generation. Participants responded to demographic questions describing the institutional auspice of the work, primary race/ethnicity of the students they teach, their race/ethnicity, the educational level(s) at which they teach, and their teaching role. After answering these questions, they responded to the following focus prompt: In the context that I work (classroom, agency, etc.) students demonstrate competency to engage with diverse persons by... Participants were instructed to complete the prompt with as many distinct statements as they chose. After the data generation, sorting, and rating activities, participants could register to participate in a random drawing for a mini iPad by following a link and providing email contact information. This phase lasted approximately two weeks. After closing this process, the author conducted statement synthesis as recommended by Kane and Trochim (2007). Statements were edited to

improve clarity, split compound ideas, and eliminate redundancy prior to opening the sorting activity.

**Phase 3: Sorting and Phase 4: Rating.** Participants were recruited using the same stratified scheme as described for the idea generation phase. The initial recruitment included an email to each of the 32 schools asked to participate in idea generation and 100 additional schools in each of the three stratified categories over two waves. Phase 3 and 4 occurred simultaneously; participants were directed to sort first, but were not restricted from rating first. Participants responded to demographic questions, sorted the statements into concept categories, and labeled the categories. Participants then rated the importance of each statement to student's demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice using a Likert scale (1-5); rated how difficult or easy each statement is to assess related to student's demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice using a Likert scale (1-5); and rated each statement, yes, if they adequately assess student's performance related to the statement or, no, if they do not or it is not in their purview of instruction. This stage took place over two weeks.

**Phase 5: Analysis and Interpretation.** The software was used to aggregate the generated data to create the concept map. The analysis included only data from participants who completed the activity. The software used multi-dimensional scaling to locate each statement as a separate point on the map and then to visually group statements as participants had grouped them. The software employed hierarchical cluster analysis to create conceptual clusters and calculated average ratings for each statement and cluster of statements. Analysis included creation and interpretation of: 1) A point

map which indicates the relationship of each statement; 2) a cluster map which indicates the conceptual categories; 3) rating maps which provide a visual depiction of the statements or clusters that participants thought were most important and; 4) pattern matches which compare cluster ratings based on selected criteria. A meeting was convened with five stakeholders selected for their expertise in social work education to review the data and to determine the appropriate final cluster solution. Additionally, the degree of configural similarity was determined from computation of Pearson's product-movement correlation coefficient determine whether groups differed statistically by role, clusters, or ratings.

**Phase 6. Implementation**. The Implications and Conclusion section of this article discusses implementation possibilities.

## Findings

**Participants.** Table 3 details participant descriptions with frequencies and percentages by activity. Participants were social work faculty and field instructors who may have completed one or more of the activities (see Table 3). Overall, 91 participants agreed to participate in the project and answered the demographic questions. Of them, 15 completed brainstorming, 28 completed the sorting, 35 completed rating #1, 23 completed rating #2, and 25 completed rating #3. This exceeds the minimum recommendation of at least 10 brainstorm participants (Kane & Trochim, 2007, p. 36) and 15 sort participants (Jackson and Trochim, 2002). At 48%, the completion percentage for brainstorming was lower than the 52% average (Rosas & Kane, 2007, p. 201) found in their review of concept mapping studies. However, in this study, completion

percentages for rating as compared to sorting (125% for rating #1, 82 % for rating #2, and 89% for rating #3, all exceeded the 68% average completion rate for a first rating and the 48% average for a second rating Rosas & Kane found. In the case of rating #1 the number of raters exceeded the number of sorters.

All participants who completed the brainstorm activity were faculty. Of that total, 60 % had no field liaison responsibility and 40 % had field liaison responsibility. Those who sorted were 58 % faculty and 42 % field instructor participants. The percentage range for the three rating activates was 57- 68 % faculty and 32-43 % field instructors.

**Table 3. Participant Characteristics by Research Activity**

| | Brainstorm n=15 | | Sorting N=28 | | Importance Rating N=35 | | Ease of Assessment Rating N=23 | | Adequately Assessed N=25 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % | n | % |
| Institutional Auspice | | | | | | | | | | |
| Public | 13 | 86.7 | 16 | 57.1 | 21 | 60.0 | 13 | 56.5 | 16 | 64.0 |
| Private-religion | 1 | 6.7 | 3 | 10.7 | 3 | 8.6 | 2 | 9.7 | 2 | 8.0 |
| Private | 1 | 6.7 | 8 | 28.6 | 9 | 25.7 | 7 | 30.4 | 6 | 24.0 |
| Other | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 3.6 | 2 | 5.7 | 1 | 4.3 | 1 | 4.0 |
| Primary Ethnicity Taught | | | | | | | | | | |
| White | 6 | 40.0 | 22 | 78.6 | 28 | 80.0 | 17 | 73.9 | 19 | 76.0 |
| African American/Black | 2 | 13.3 | 2 | 7.1 | 3 | 8.57 | 2 | 8.7 | 3 | 12.0 |
| American Indian | 1 | 6.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Asian American/Asian | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino/ Chicano | 4 | 26.7 | 4 | 14.3 | 4 | 11.43 | 4 | 17.4 | 3 | 12. |
| Other | 2 | 13.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 |
| Level Taught | | | | | | | | | | |
| BSW | 7 | 46.7 | 12 | 42.9 | 15 | 42.9 | 9 | 39.1 | 11 | 44.0 |
| MSW | 4 | 26.7 | 6 | 21.4 | 9 | 25.7 | 5 | 21.7 | 6 | 24.0 |
| Both | 4 | 26.7 | 9 | 32.1 | 10 | 28.6 | 8 | 34.8 | 7 | 28.0 |
| Neither | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 3.6 | 1 | 2.9 | 1 | 4.3 | 1 | 4.0 |

Table 3 (continued)

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participants Ethnicity | | | | | | | | | | |
| White (non-Hispanic) | 12 | 80.0 | 22 | 78.6 | 26 | 74.2 | 17 | 73.9 | 19 | 76.0 |
| African American/Black | 1 | 6.7 | 3 | 10.7 | 5 | 14.2 | 3 | 13.0 | 4 | 16.0 |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano | 2 | 13.3 | 2 | 7.1 | 2 | 5.7 | 2 | 8.7 | 1 | 4.0 |
| American Indian | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Asian American/Other Asian | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Multi-race | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 3.6 | 1 | 2.9 | 1 | 4.3 | 1 | 4.0 |
| Role | | | | | | | | | | |
| Faculty w/o field liaison role | 9 | 60.0 | 7 | 25.0 | 8 | 22.9 | 5 | 21.7 | 7 | 28.0 |
| Faculty with field liaison role | 6 | 40.0 | 9 | 32.1 | 12 | 34.3 | 9 | 39.1 | 10 | 40.0 |
| Field instructor | 0 | | 12 | 42.9 | 15 | 42.9 | 9 | 39.1 | 8 | 32. |

## Results

**Overview.** The stress value, a goodness of fit indicator, was .28 after 29 iterations. Lower stress values reflect more congruence between the raw data and the model. The stress value for this study was equal to the average and well within the average range of .17-.34 in the concept mapping studies Rosas and Kane (2012, p. 240) reviewed, indicating internal representational validity for this study. Rosas and Kane (2012) define internal representational validity as "to the degree to which the conceptualized model reflects the judgments made by participants in organizing information to produce the model." (p. 237)

In response to the focus prompt, the 15 brainstorming participants generated 30 statements (Supplemental Data D). The relatively small number of statements generated is likely attributable to many statements containing compound ideas which were subsequently separated and the functional software design which allows participants to review statements generated by other participants which decreases redundancy. After idea generation, the primary researcher utilized the guidelines that Kane and Trochim

(2007, p. 60) recommend for reviewing the statement set for redundancy and compounded concepts. The primary researcher eliminated three redundant statements and separated compound concepts to arrive at 47 conceptual statements that indicated participants' perspectives of students' demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice with individuals.

A point map was produced. Each point on the map represents a statement. Each point has an associated statement number. The map depicts the relative position of each individual statement to all the other statements. The closeness of points indicates the level of similarity or difference in meaning as determined by how often participants sort statements together. Consequently, the data is structured by the statement relationships.

After the point map was generated, the software was used to produce several maps with different cluster solutions for review and analysis. In collaboration with stakeholders, who reviewed each of the maps, the computer-generated ten-cluster solution was determined to be the most conceptually sound and provided the optimum level of specificity and richness. No changes were made to the computer-generated ten-cluster solution as the primary researcher and the stakeholders evaluated the placement of each statement as being appropriate to the map's statistical and conceptual organization. Additionally, the stakeholders reviewed the computer-generated cluster labels and renamed them based on their judgment of what the most descriptive conceptual meaning of each cluster. Figure 8 depicts this concept map and Table 4 lists the statements by cluster.

**Figure 8. Cluster Map of Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice**

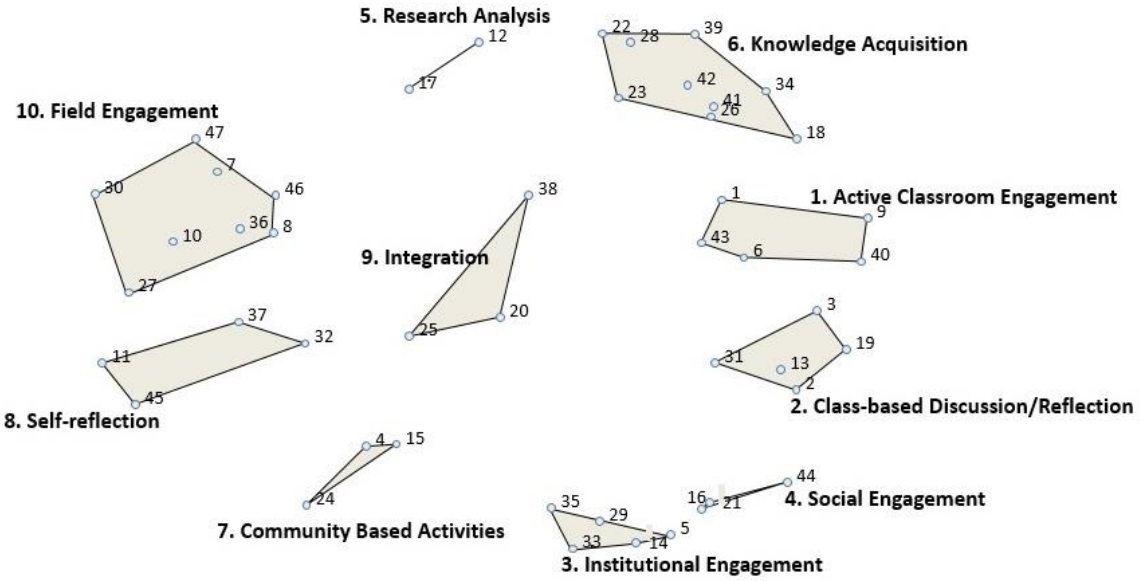



**Table 4: Concept Statements by Cluster**

| Cluster | Statement |
|---|---|
| 1. Active Classroom Engagement | |
| 1 | Performance on specific assignments regarding diverse populations. |
| 6 | Participating in role-play analysis |
| 9 | Demonstrating appropriate interaction as demonstrated in class discussions |
| 40 | Interacting with and learning from speakers in the classroom |
| 43 | Utilizing media |
| 2. Class-based Discussion/Reflection | |
| 2 | Reflecting upon diversity issues encountered through previous life experiences. |
| 3 | Discussing diversity issues encountered through experiences in class |
| 13 | Discussing diversity issues encountered through previous life experiences. |
| 19 | Working in diverse groups in class. |
| 31 | Reflecting upon diversity issues experienced in class. |
| 3. Institutional Engagement | |
| 5 | Attending a social work program with language diversity. |

Table 4 (continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| 14 | Attending a Social Work Program with racially diverse students. |
| 29 | Engaging with diverse persons among the faculty |
| 33 | Attending a social work program in a city/town with diverse populations |
| 35 | Engaging with diverse persons among the staff |
| 4. Social Engagement | |
| 16 | Engaging with diverse friends |
| 21 | Engaging with diverse neighbors |
| 44 | Engaging with diverse persons among their classmates |
| 5. Research Analysis | |
| 12 | Critically assessing research to guide their practice |
| 17 | Engaging in analysis of case conceptualizations |
| 6. Knowledge Acquisition | |
| 18 | Demonstrating population specific knowledge in class |
| 26 | Gaining knowledge of racial identities |
| 28 | Consuming research |
| 34 | Researching diverse populations |
| 39 | Exploration of issues in the literature |
| 41 | Learning about cultural competence |
| 42 | Learning how to be culturally competent in all stages of research |
| 22 | Reading and analyzing literature and readings |
| 23 | Learning about assessments that considers culture |
| 7. Community Based Activities | |
| 4 | Engaging in experiential learning of cultural competent practice |
| 15 | Engaging with diverse clients |
| 24 | Engagement in community based activities |
| 8. Self-reflection | |
| 11 | Personal reflection about use of self. |
| 32 | Engaging in discussions about their field practicums |
| 37 | Reflecting on diversity issues encountered in practicum activities. |
| 45 | Personal reflection about identity position |
| 9. Integration | |
| 20 | Demonstrating awareness of the effect that their own racial identity has on their awareness of diversity issues |
| 25 | Discussing diversity issues in class that are encountered in practicum activities |
| 38 | Adherence to social work values and ethics in the classroom |
| 10. Field Engagement | |
| 7 | Demonstrating population specific knowledge in their field practicum |
| 8 | Demonstrating appropriate interactions as reflected in their journal writing. |

Table 4 (continued)

| | |
|---|---|
| 10 | Assessing the cultural competency of their practicum agencies |
| 27 | Reflecting on similarities and differences in their practicum agencies |
| 30 | Adherence to social work values and ethics in their field practicum |
| 36 | Demonstrating appropriate interaction as reflected in their process recordings |
| 46 | Identifying diversity in their practicum agencies |
| 47 | Making recommendations to improve competency in their practicum agencies |

Meaning may be inferred based on the placement of the clusters on the map. The concept category at the center of the map, Integration, might be said to be central to the conceptual framework in that its placement indicates that the statements in this concept category, and consequently the concepts category itself, serves as a bridge to the other categories in the map. The bulleted numbers on the map correspond with the statements assigned to each cluster.

**Overall cluster and statement ratings.** Clusters and statements were ranked for importance from a scale of 1-5 (1=relatively unimportant; 2=somewhat important; 3=moderately important; 4=very important; and 5=extremely important). All clusters and statements were rated 3.00 or higher. Clusters with the highest ratings for importance (average cluster rating was 4.03) were: Community based activities (4.50); Self-reflection (4.54), and Integration (4.57). Statements with the highest ratings for importance were: Adherence to social work values and ethics in their field practicum (4.86); Personal reflection about use of self (4.78); and Adherence to social work values and ethics in the classroom (4.72). A complete list of statements by cluster with the cluster and statement rating averages for importance, ease of assessment, and adequately assessed is provided in Supplemental Data D.

**Ease of assessment.** Participants rated each cluster and statement for ease of assessment on a 1-5 Likert scale (1= extremely difficult to assess; 2=moderately difficult to assess; 3=somewhat easy to assess; 4=very easy to assess; and 5=extremely easy to assess). All statements and clusters were rated 2.68 or higher. Clusters rated the most difficult to assess (average rating was 3.52) were: Social engagement (2.79); Institutional engagement (3.38); and Active classroom engagement (3.44). Statements that were most difficult to assess were: Engaging with diverse neighbors (2.68); Engaging with diverse friends (2.79); and Consuming research (2.88).

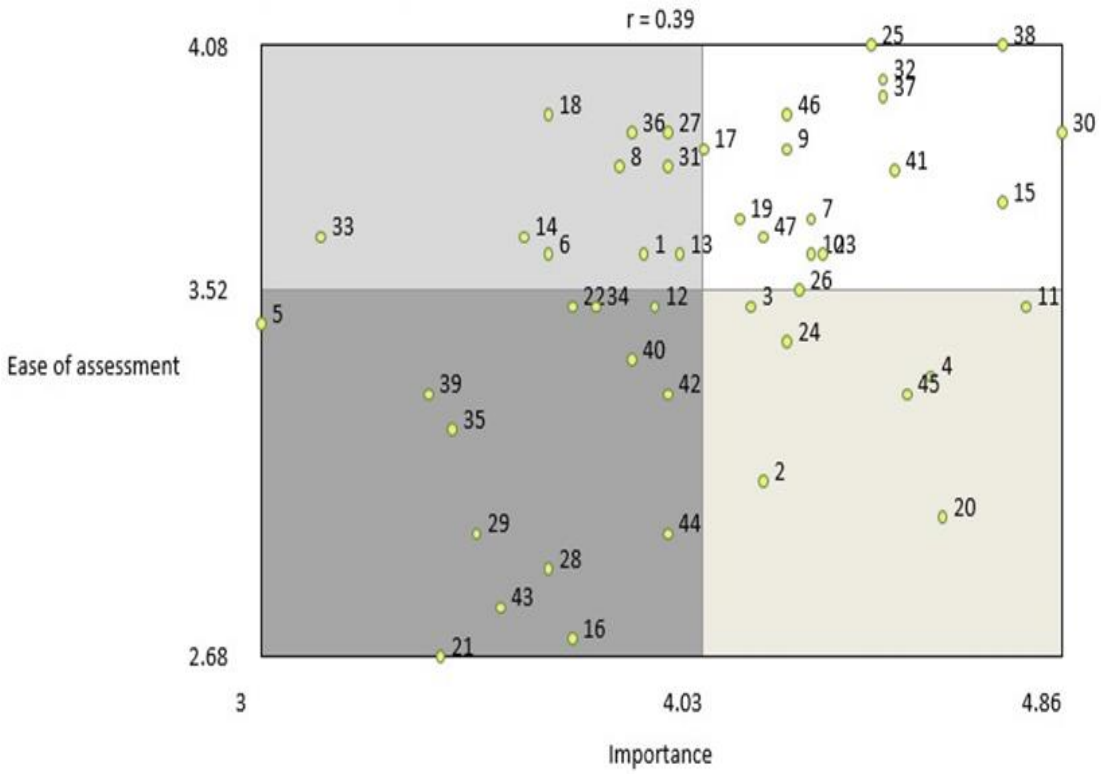
**Adequately assessed.** Participants indicated whether they adequately assess each cluster and statement with a yes (1) or no (0). Clusters and statements were rated in the range of .16 - .92. Clusters rated the least adequately assessed (average total rating was .71) were: Social engagement (.37); Institutional engagement (.47); and Class-based discussion/reflection (.71). The statements rated least adequately assessed were: Engaging with diverse neighbors (.16); Engaging with diverse friends (.37); and Attending a social work program with language diversity (.40). Because all statements were rated at least moderately important it may also be important to notice any other adequately assessed rating which falls below the average.

**Importance and adequately assessed correlation.** Overall, the strength of the correlation between the importance and adequately assessed ratings is high (r = .76). With the exception of Class-based discussion/reflection, all clusters that were above the average in importance were above the average in being adequately assessed. However, both Discussing diversity issues encountered through experiences in class, and Working

in diverse groups in class, have importance ratings that are above the average and adequately assessed ratings below the average. Also in the case of Working in diverse groups in class, the ease of assessment rating is above the average indicating that difficulty in assessing this statement is probably not the reason it is less often adequately assessed.

**Importance and ease of assessment correlations.** The overall strength of the correlation between the importance and ease of assessment ratings is moderate (r =.39). With the exception of the cluster, Community based activities, all other clusters that were above the average in importance were also above the average in ease of assessment. Figure 9 provides the visual representations of the relationship of importance ratings with the ease of assessment rating. The statements represented in the lower right quadrant of the figure are higher than the average in importance and lower than the average in ease of assessment. The statements in this quadrant are Reflecting upon diversity issues encountered through previous life experiences, Discussing diversity issues encountered through experiences in class, Engaging in experiential learning of cultural competent practice, Personal reflection about use of self, Demonstrating awareness of the effect that their own racial identity has on their awareness of diversity issues, Engagement in community based activities, and Personal reflection about identity position.

**Figure 9. Correlations of Importance and Ease of Assessment by Statement**



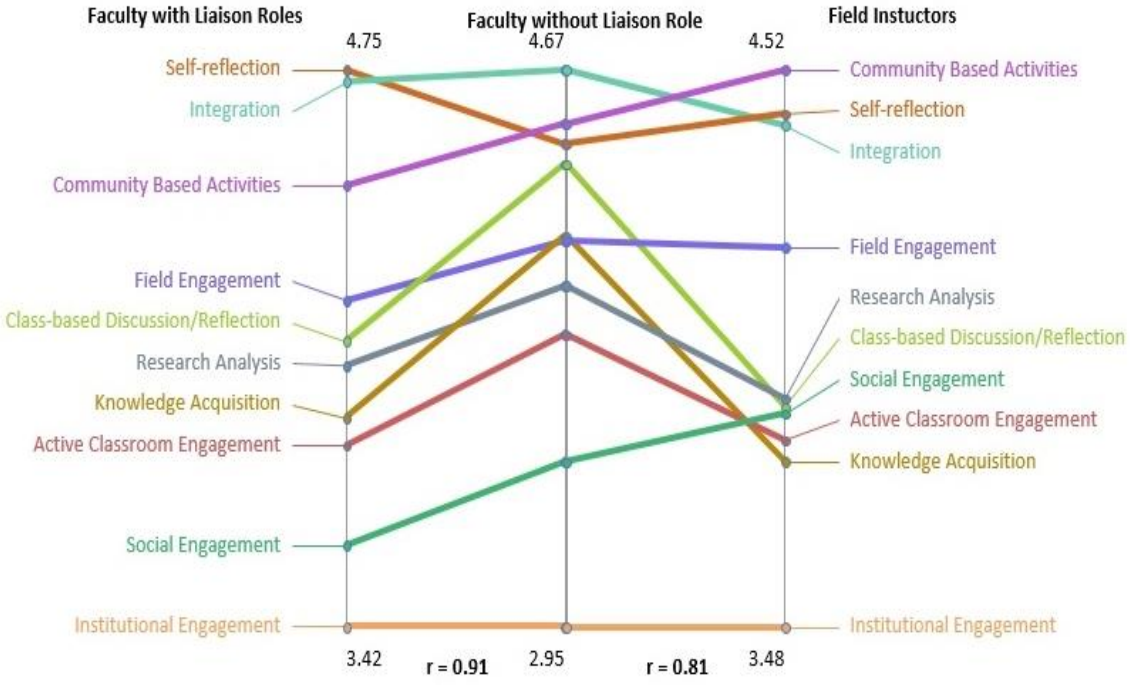

**Ease of assessment and adequately assessed.** The overall strength of the ease of assessment and adequately assessed ratings is high (r = .57). Although all clusters that are above the average in the ease of assessment rating are also at or above the average rating for adequately assessed, several statements are above the average rating for ease of assessment but below the average for adequately assessed. These statements are:

Participating in role-play analysis, Attending a social work program with racially diverse students, Demonstrating population specific knowledge in class, Working in diverse groups in class, Attending a social work program in a city/town with diverse populations.

## Comparisons Between Faculty and Field Instructor Ratings by Cluster

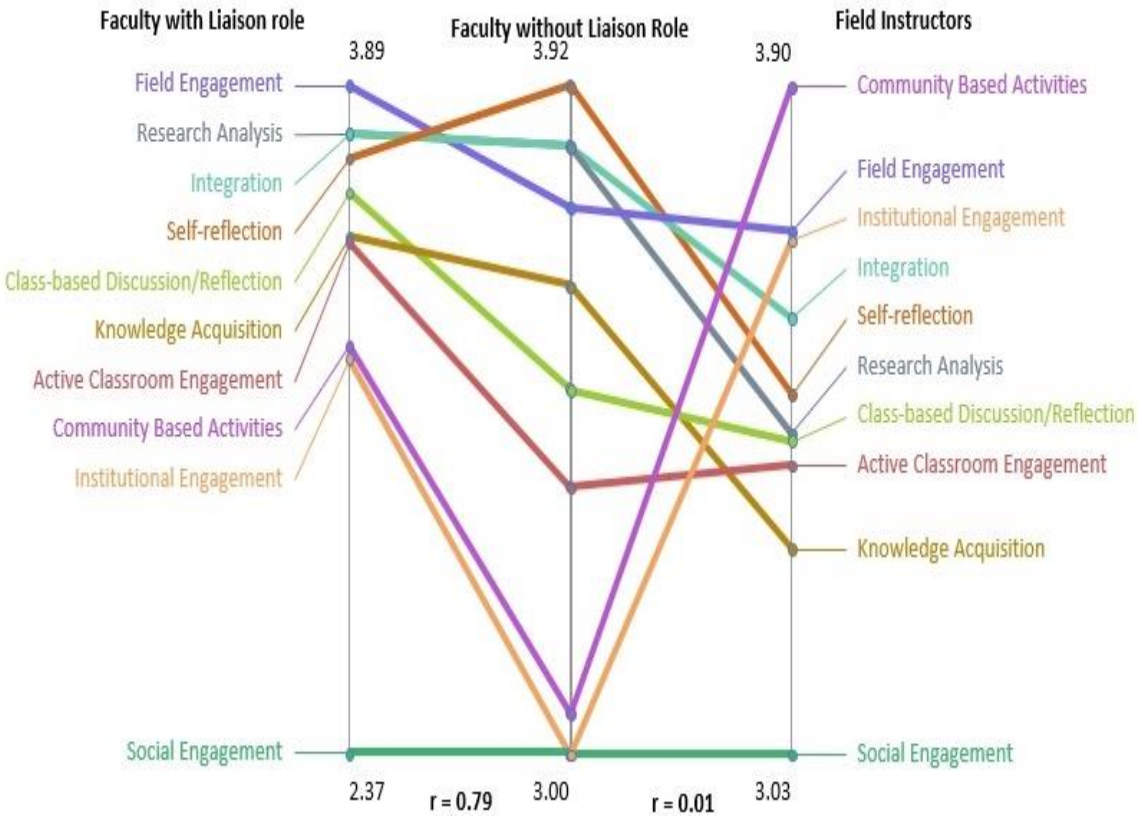
**Cluster importance ratings.** While there was a strong correlation of the importance ratings between faculty with liaison responsibility and faculty without liaison responsibility ratings (r =.91), faculty without liaison responsibility and field instructors ratings (r =.81), and faculty with liaison responsibility and field instructors (r =.93) there are variations in the order of importance that each rates the clusters. Figure 10 provides a visual depiction of the order and the relationship of group cluster ratings. Overall, faculty with liaison roles and field instructors rated clusters more similarly than either did with faculty without liaison roles.

**Figure 10. Pattern Match of Importance Ratings by Role**



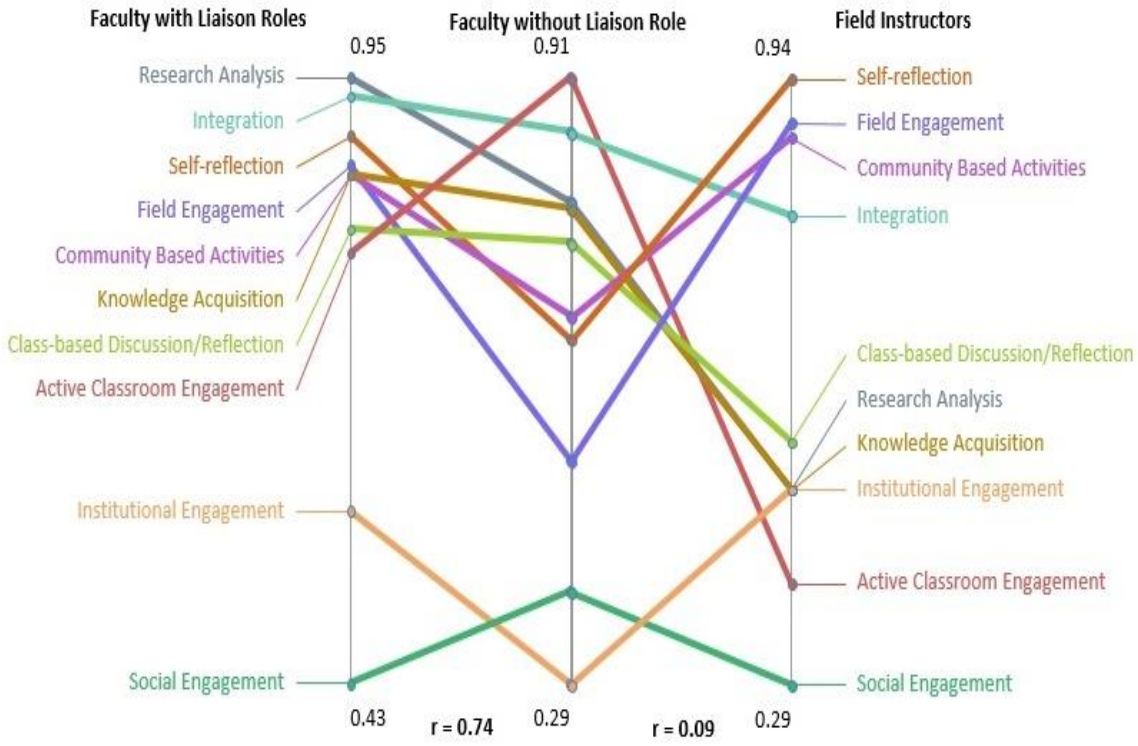

**Cluster ease of assessment ratings**. There was a strong correlation between faculty with liaison responsibilities and faculty without liaison (r = .79), a moderate correlation between faculty with field liaison responsibilities and field instructors (r =.50), faculty with liaison and field instructors ratings moderate (r =.50), and a very weak correlation between faculty without liaison responsibilities and field instructors (r =.01) for ease of assessment ratings. There was a large degree of variation in the order of clusters for ease of assessment between role categories. Figure 11 provides a visual depiction of the order and relationship of cluster rating for ease of assessment by role category.

**Figure 11. Patten Match of Ease of Assessment by Role**




**Cluster adequately assessed ratings.** There were strong correlations between faculty with liaison responsibility and faculty without liaison responsibility ratings (r =.74) and faculty with liaison responsibility and field instructors (r = .62) for adequately assessed rating. There was a very weak correlation between faculty without liaison responsibility and field instructors ratings (r =.09). There were important variations in the order of importance that each rates the clusters. Figure 12 provides a visual depiction of the order and relationship of cluster rating for adequately assesses by role category.

**Figure 12. Pattern Match of Adequately Assessed by Role**




## Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the qualitative brainstorming, sorting generated elements (statements) into thematic categories (clusters), and multidimensional scaling and clustering resulted in a conceptually understandable framework that encompasses faculty and field instructors' conceptualization of students' demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice. The elements and thematic categories provide insight into what faculty and field instructors consider important, their perceptions of the ease of assessment, and which elements they believe they adequately assess. These findings have implications related to curriculum features, teaching methods, and assessment of student competency to ensure social work students' acquisition of engaging diversity and difference in practice.

The statements are useful to consider as relevant for curriculum elements and teaching methods. If the statements reflect how students demonstrate engaging diversity and difference in practice, it serves to follow that the curriculum and methods should provide opportunities for demonstration of those particular elements. Consequently, for example, it would be important to ensure that teaching methods included opportunities for students to work in diverse groups, reflect on diversity issues encountered in their field practicums and make recommendations to improve competency in their practicum agencies. A list of the statements could easily be used to determine whether the social work education experiences of students allows opportunity to demonstrate each of the elements.

Additionally, the ratings of the statements can be used to identify assessment needs and priorities. For example, Statements with the highest ratings for importance were: Adherence to social work values and ethics in their field practicum; Personal reflection about use of self; and Adherence to social work values and ethics in the classroom might be prioritized for assessment over statements with lower ratings. Likewise, statements rated very important but more difficult to assess such Discussing diversity issues in class and Working in diverse groups in class might be prioritized for development of assessment tools or improving instructor assessment skills.

**Overall cluster map representation.** Although the size of any cluster both in terms of the area it takes up or the number of elements contained within it does not reflect the importance of that cluster, the placement of each conceptual theme does provide

information about the cluster. For example, the placement of the cluster, Integration, at the center of the map indicates that it is conceptually related to other statements and clusters and serves as a conceptual bridge. This is also congruent with its rating as the most important conceptual category in this conceptual framework. Additionally, that faculty without field liaison responsibilities, faculty with liaison responsibilities, and field instructors all highly value the importance of the integration theme, all find it somewhat to very easy to assess, and all rated it high in adequately assessed, is a positive finding in that this supports CSWE's (2008) goal of the outcome approach to ensure demonstration of the integration and application of the competencies in practice

As Figure 3 indicates, the hierarchical placement of categories relative to the importance rating suggests that prioritization of the Integration category, followed by Self-reflection, and Community based activities provide support for developing curricula that include the elements of those categories to help students meet the competence of engaging diversity and difference in practice. This hierarchical ranking would have knowledge acquisition, social engagement, and institutional engagement as part of the conceptualization but of less importance as curricular priorities. Knowledge acquisition, rated as moderately to very important, is also ranked one of the less important categories and near the bottom for rating of adequately assessed for student acquisition of engaging diversity and difference in practice. This calls into question the historical use of a cultural competence framework in social work, which has been most often conceptualized as competency in attitudes, knowledge, and skills (Van Den Bergh & Crisp, 2004).

Though social engagement and institutional engagement were part of the conceptualization of students' demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice, they were rated as moderately to very important, and their ease of assessment was rated as moderately difficult to somewhat easy, but less than 50 % of the participants reported adequately assessing them. Clearly, these categories were the least valued in importance relative to other categories but the findings raise questions about the purview of assessment. Perhaps assessment of the Institutional engagement and Social engagement themes should not lie with faculty or field instructors but is in the purview of the context of the social work program. This speaks directly to and supports CSWE's (2008) implicit curriculum accreditation requirements for social work programs that address diversity of the learning environment.

Cluster correlations revealed that both Community-based activities and Class-based discussion reflection were rated above the average in importance but below the average in ease of assessment and that Class-based discussion/reflection was rated above the average in importance and below the average in adequately assessed. This indicates that there is a need for more analysis of these clusters and possible a need for more or better tools to assess these categories. Analysis of the relationships of importance and adequately assessed rating for statements indicate that there may be a need for new or different tools for assessing students' discussion of diversity issues encountered through experiences in class and of student's working in diverse groups in class.

Faculty with liaison responsibilities were more similar faculty without field responsibilities and field instructors than either of them were to the other in each

category. This may speak to the role of faculty with liaison responsibilities as the primary bridge from social work education programs to and from field education and give weight to the importance of the liaison role in engaging diversity and difference in practice and in social work education in general. Significant differences between faculty with liaison responsibilities and field instructor ratings in Class-based discussion and reflection, Research analysis, and Knowledge acquisition may serve as an indication that assessment of these categories is primarily situated in the social work program context. Significant differences in adequately assessed ratings between faculty with liaison responsibilities and faculty without liaison responsibilities such as Self-reflection, and Research analysis indicate that within the social work program context faculty with field liaison responsibilities carry the bulk of the load for assessment in these areas. Significant differences between faculty without liaison roles and field instructors may indicate that assessment of these categories is primarily situated in the field education context. Conceptually it makes sense that class room engagement and class-based discussion/reflection assessment would be situated almost exclusively in the classroom, but if field education is the site of integration of content knowledge, it points to a need for field instructors to do more assessment of the Knowledge acquisition category.

Given the different roles and activities of faculty with field liaison responsibilities, faculty without field liaison responsibilities, and field instructors, it is logical that there would be differences in what they adequately assess. For example, it is logical that there would be little difference between faculty with liaison responsibilities and faculty without liaison responsibilities and significant difference between faculty and

field instructors in Active classroom engagement given the classroom context inherent to that cluster. This is also true of faculty with liaison responsibilities and field instructors' ratings of field engagement given their specific roles. Yet some of the differences merit consideration. For example, the marked difference in assessment of Self-reflection is of considerable importance. The Self-reflection theme, though highly valued overall, was rated less important by faculty without liaison responsibilities. Compared to faculty with liaison responsibilities and field faculty, faculty without liaison responsibilities also rated this category significantly lower in importance despite the fact that they rated ease of assessment of Self-reflection higher than any other category and higher than either faculty with liaison responsibility and field instructors. This may indicate that Self-reflection is less in the assessment purview of faculty without liaison responsibilities. An alternative view may be that since faculty without liaison responsibility value the Self-reflection theme less, they assess it less despite the ease of assessment. This would indicate that faculty without field liaison responsibilities may need more information about or be convinced of the value of self-reflection and how to integrate it into their teaching role.

However, Class-based discussion/reflection is very much in the purview of faculty without liaison responsibility; in fact, faculty without liaison responsibility valued it significantly more than faculty with liaison responsibility and field instructors. Still, faculty without liaison responsibility had adequately assessed ratings similar to field instructors and faculty with liaison responsibilities. That faculty without liaison responsibilities would rate class-based discussion/refection no easier to assess than field

instructors given their role in the classroom begs further inquiry. Perhaps this indicates a need for better classroom tools to assess class-based discussion/reflection.

Observation of the relationship among statement ratings provides additional insight that might help in developing better assessment tools. Given that lack of ease of assessment is likely the root of lower ratings in adequately assessed for many of the following elements, it is important to develop assessment approaches and tools for these elements which make them easier to assess: Discussing diversity issues encountered through experiences in class; Reflecting on diversity issues encountered through previous life experiences; Engaging in experiential learning of cultural competent practice; Personal reflection about use of self; Demonstrating awareness of the effect that their own racial identity has on their awareness of diversity issues; Engagement in community based activities; and Personal reflection about identity position. Also, given that all elements of this framework are at least moderately important why is it that elements such as Participating in role-play analysis, Interacting with and learning from speakers in the classroom, and Critically assessing research to guide their practice, which participants in all categories rated as more easily assessed are not more adequately assessed. A concern that most stands out in this area relates to the statement, Working in diverse groups in class, which was rated as relatively easy to assess and very important but rated below the average in adequately assessed. One possible explanation is that while faculty and field instructors believe these elements are important, they may not be included in the curriculum or used by instructors. This, of course, has implications for teaching methods

and curriculum which might include the need for increasing the inclusion classroom work in diverse groups.

**Limitations**

One important limitation of this study concerns the number of participants. Though this study exceeded minimum sample recommendations for concept mapping (Jackson and Trochim, 2002) more participants would have been beneficial. While the recruitment methods attempted to engage a wide range of participants, analysis of the degree of success of those efforts is hampered by the limited participant descriptive data for analysis. Additionally, more participant descriptive data might have increased the ability to analyze and compare characteristics with the wider population of social work faculty and field instructors to provide a better sense of the generalizability of the outcomes of this study. Also, the small sample size resulted in the underrepresentation of people of color. Certainly, this study took a considerable amount of time for participants to complete and 41 participants opted out after only completing the demographic data. The impact of the time commitment required to complete the study on participation by role, race/ethnicity, and institutional auspice is unknown. Also, the idea generation phase also lacked the input of field instructors. It is impossible to know if they might have had different conceptualizations of the construct.

Another limitation concerns the methodology. Generally in concept mapping the stakeholders who inform the study in planning and in the analysis phases are also study participants. In this study, because the study was web-based and participants were recruited nationally, the stakeholders participating in the planning and analysis phases

were not study participants. Though this likely may increase transferability of the findings beyond the study participants, there is concern about the unknown ways this might have affected the study. Also, while the guidelines that Kane and Trochim (2007, p. 60) recommend for synthesizing statements was used to eliminate redundancy and organize the statements, the primary researcher conducted this activity solo. These limitations create a need for caution regarding the study's generalization.

**Conclusion**

This study provides a much needed conceptual framework for the CSWE (2008) core competency "to engage diversity and difference in practice." It represents a first step in operationalizing engaging diversity and difference in practice for the purpose of informing curriculum development and teaching methods and designing assessment tools. The individual and thematic elements provide potential markers that social work programs might consider in teaching and evaluating students' acquisition of engaging diversity and difference in practice. They also present opportunities for deeper analysis of social work faculty and field instructors' roles. Future research might consider any one of the thematic categories or individual elements for exploration and analysis. Additionally, exploration about the impact of individual and contextual factors such as race/ethnicity, institutional auspice, Carnegie classification of the institution, and student characteristics would expand understanding about contextual factors related to student outcomes.

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## Supplemental Data D.

### Participants Pre-synthesis Brainstormed Statements

1. Talking about their field placements and engaging in role-plays and case conceptualizations
2. Learning about cultural competence and assessment that considers culture
3. Their individual performance on specific signature assignments regarding diverse populations
4. Demonstrating appropriate interaction as demonstrated in discussions
5. Openly discussing and reflecting upon diversity issues encountered through previous life experience, current practicum activities, and experiences in class as students
6. Working in diverse groups in class
7. Personal reflection about identity position and use of self
8. Developing cultural competency assessments of their practicum agencies
9. Identifying diversity in their practicum agencies
10. Gaining knowledge of racial identity and the effect this has on awareness of diversity issues
11. Engaging in experiential learning of cultural competent practice
12. Reading and analyzing literature and readings
13. Engaging with diverse persons among their classmates
14. Learning how to be culturally competent in all stages of research
15. Attending an MSW program that enrolls 200 students from diverse backgrounds who work in the most diverse city in CA, to work with the most diverse clients - Asian/PA, African American, Latino, White - 57+ languages spoken here.
16. Making recommendations to improve competency in their practicum agencies
17. Reflecting on similarities and differences in their practicum agencies
18. Participating in role analysis
19. Interacting with and learning from speakers
20. Utilizing media
21. Engaging in discussions about field
22. Community based activities
23. Engaging with diverse persons among the faculty and staff
24. Engaging with diverse clients, friends, and neighbors
25. Consuming research and critically assessing research to guide their practice
26. Researching diverse populations
27. Adherence to social work values and ethics
28. Exploration of issues in the literature
29. Demonstrating population specific knowledge
30. Demonstrating appropriate interactions as reflected in journals, and process recordings submitted during field seminar class

## Supplemental Data E.

## Average Cluster and Statement Ratings by Criteria

| Cluster | | Statement | Importance N=35 Range (1-5) | Ease of assessment N=23 Range (1-5) | Adequately assess N=25 Range (0-1) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Total Average Rating | 4.03 | 3.52 | .71 |
| 1. Active Classroom Engagement | | | 3.84 | 3.44 | .70 |
| | 1 | Performance on specific assignments regarding diverse populations. | 3.89 | 3.60 | .84 |
| | 6 | Participating in role-play analysis | 3.67 | 3.60 | .68 |
| | 9 | Demonstrating appropriate interaction as demonstrated in class discussions | 4.22 | 3.84 | .80 |
| | 40 | Interacting with and learning from speakers in the classroom | 3.86 | 3.36 | .68 |
| | 43 | Utilizing media | 3.56 | 2.79 | .52 |
| 2. Class-based Discussion/Reflection | | | 4.07 | 3.53 | .71 |
| | 2 | Reflecting upon diversity issues encountered through previous life experiences. | 4.17 | 3.08 | .76 |
| | 3 | Discussing diversity issues encountered through experiences in class | 4.14 | 3.48 | .68 |
| | 13 | Discussing diversity issues encountered through previous life experiences. | 3.97 | 3.60 | .80 |
| | 19 | Working in diverse groups in class. | 4.11 | 3.68 | .60 |
| | 31 | Reflecting upon diversity issues experienced in class. | 3.94 | 3.80 | .72 |
| 3. Institutional Engagement | | | 3.34 | 3.38 | .47 |
| | 5 | Attending a social work program with language diversity. | 3.00 | 3.44 | .40 |
| | 14 | Attending a Social Work Program with racially diverse students. | 3.61 | 3.64 | .56 |
| | 29 | Engaging with diverse persons among the faculty | 3.50 | 2.96 | .44 |
| | 33 | Attending a social work program in a city/town with diverse populations | 3.14 | 3.64 | .52 |
| | 35 | Engaging with diverse persons among the staff | 3.44 | 3.20 | .44 |
| 4. Social Engagement | | | 3.69 | 2.79 | .37 |
| | 16 | Engaging with diverse friends | 3.72 | 2.72 | .24 |
| | 21 | Engaging with diverse neighbors | 3.42 | 2.68 | .16 |

Supplemental Data E (continued)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 44 | Engaging with diverse persons among their classmates | 3.94 | 2.96 | .72 |
| 5. Research Analysis | | | 3.97 | 3.66 | .76 |
| | 12 | Critically assessing research to guide their practice | 3.91 | 3.48 | .68 |
| | 17 | Engaging in analysis of case conceptualizations | 4.03 | 3.84 | .84 |
| 6. Knowledge Acquisition | | | 3.91 | 3.47 | .72 |
| | 18 | Demonstrating population specific knowledge in class | 3.67 | 3.92 | .68 |
| | 26 | Gaining knowledge of racial identities | 4.25 | 3.52 | .76 |
| | 28 | Consuming research | 3.67 | 2.88 | .68 |
| | 34 | Researching diverse populations | 3.78 | 3.48 | .64 |
| | 39 | Exploration of issues in the literature | 3.39 | 3.28 | .72 |
| | 41 | Learning about cultural competence | 4.47 | 3.79 | .88 |
| | 42 | Learning how to be culturally competent in all stages of research | 3.94 | 3.28 | .72 |
| | 22 | Reading and analyzing literature and readings | 3.72 | 3.48 | .56 |
| | 23 | Learning about assessments that considers culture | 4.31 | 3.60 | .88 |
| 7. Community Based Activities | | | 4.50 | 3.48 | .81 |
| | 4 | Engaging in experiential learning of cultural competent practice | 4.56 | 3.32 | .80 |
| | 15 | Engaging with diverse clients | 4.72 | 3.72 | .92 |
| | 24 | Engagement in community based activities | 4.22 | 3.40 | .72 |
| 8. Self-reflection | | | 4.54 | 3.68 | .84 |
| | 11 | Personal reflection about use of self. | 4.78 | 3.48 | .88 |
| | 32 | Engaging in discussions about their field practicums | 4.44 | 4.00 | .88 |
| | 37 | Reflecting on diversity issues encountered in practicum activities. | 4.44 | 3.96 | .80 |
| | 45 | Personal reflection about identity position | 4.50 | 3.28 | .80 |
| 9. Integration | | | 4.57 | 3.72 | .87 |
| | 20 | Demonstrating awareness of the effect that their own racial identity has on their awareness of diversity issues | 4.58 | 3.00 | .96 |
| | 25 | Discussing diversity issues in class that are encountered in practicum activities | 4.42 | 4.08 | .80 |
| | 38 | Adherence to social work values and ethics in the classroom | 4.72 | 4.08 | .84 |

Supplemental Data E (continued)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. Field Engagement | | | 4.18 | 3.78 | .78 |
| | 7 | Demonstrating population specific knowledge in their field practicum | 4.28 | 3.68 | .84 |
| | 8 | Demonstrating appropriate interactions as reflected in their journal writing. | 3.83 | 3.80 | .72 |
| | 10 | Assessing the cultural competency of their practicum agencies | 4.28 | 3.60 | .72 |
| | 27 | Reflecting on similarities and differences in their practicum agencies | 3.94 | 3.88 | .84 |
| | 30 | Adherence to social work values and ethics in their field practicum | 4.86 | 3.88 | .84 |
| | 36 | Demonstrating appropriate interaction as reflected in their process recordings | 3.86 | 3.88 | .76 |
| | 46 | Identifying diversity in their practicum agencies | 4.22 | 3.92 | .76 |
| | 47 | Making recommendations to improve competency in their practicum agencies | 4.17 | 3.64 | .76 |

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

In setting the minimum standards for social work program accreditation, one core competency (outcome) of essential importance CSWE (2008) has established is engaging diversity and difference in practice. Social work education programs face challenges in helping students achieve this competency because neither CSWE nor the social work education literature has operationalized this competency in a way that supports effective teaching and assessment. This dissertation addressed gaps in the literature related to the social work education student outcome engaging diversity and difference in practice. After reviewing key theories and concepts important to understanding this construct three articles were presented which together cover extensive ground and provide a foundation for addressing the conceptualization and operationalization problems pertaining to engaging diversity and difference in practice. This work used conceptual, qualitative, and mixed methodologies to arrive at the findings.

## Major Findings

**Article 1.** This article presents critical race theory as a foundation for developing a course to engage diversity and difference in practice. It builds on Jani, Ortiz, Pierce and Sowbel's (2011) conceptual work which challenges social work programs to "move social work education and practice to a new level of relevance in working with diversity and difference (p. 299). It also draws on the work of others that established CRT and social justice as models which meet the needs of social work programs for diversity education much more effectively than the cultural competence model (Bell, 2007, Ortiz & Jani, 2010). Consequently, this article begins the process of operationalizing

foundational conceptual thinking toward the commitment of social work and CRT to "social justice and offer[s] a liberatory or transformative response to racial, gender, and class oppression" (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 313).

The article describes critical race theory and its application to social work education and then presents and discusses a logic model of the course. This article experiments with applying the theoretical foundations to create a course to specifically impact engaging diversity and difference in practice as well as social justice competency. The logic model includes the three outcome areas: awareness/critical processing, knowledge/skills, action. Course methods feature discourse, assignments related to diverse identities and populations, and role-playing, all of which are elements identified as important in the studies presented in articles 2 and 3.

**Article 2.** This article reports on research designed to qualitatively explore the CSWE core competency "to engage diversity and difference in practice." It provides faculty descriptions of the "qualitative what" of the construct. This article emphasizes the qualitative dimensions of the construct and how it is qualitatively demonstrated. The article responds to the lack of empirical research on social work student outcomes, which Anastas (2010) summed up concisely when she stated, "It is clear that more and better research on the effectiveness of our educational methods in a range of areas is needed" (p. 151). It also responds to the gap in the literature related to EPAS evaluation Holloway, Black, Hoffman, and Pierce (2009) articulated.

The article reports faculty members' identification of the ways students' demonstrate that they have engaged diversity and difference in practice, which included

the thematic concepts of attitudes, skills, and readiness. Attitudes included risk-taking, courage, and knowledge seeking. Skills included listening and reparative skills. Participants perceived readiness as both an end related to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes, self-awareness, and apperception and as a means to each of them. Readiness included: (1) Experience, (2) self-awareness, (3) analysis and use of power, and (4) recognizing and acknowledging difference. Participants described a meaning-making process that allowed students to analyze knowledge and experiences and utilize them for practice. They believed it was important for the curriculum to provide students with exposure to difference, practice, and other opportunities to develop awareness and perhaps revisions to how they make meaning. Study participants also identified knowledge as foundational but not an essential component of the construct. Participants situated the context in community, field, and the classroom. Findings emphasize the role of discourse, assignments highlighting diverse identities and culture, role-playing and simulations. Additionally, this study found that faculty believe and are concerned that the curriculum, teaching, and integration of the construct is inconsistent. This study highlighted the meaning making process as extremely important. The idea that individual psychological processing is a critical element to the construct is not overtly considered in the literature about cultural competence, nor is it an overt objective in social work educations standards (CSWE, 2008) but may be reflected in the value that is placed on reflection in both studies conducted for this dissertation.

This second article supported the study reported in the third article. The concept mapping study rating criteria related to how easy it was to assess the components of…

and how adequately each faculty member believed they assessed each component were based on participants' assertions that students are developing competency in engaging diversity and difference in practice and that faculty are assessing it. It lead to the question of what is assessed and how easy or difficult is it to conduct that assessment. Another finding of this study that supported the development of the concept mapping study was that faculty put a high value on field placement. This led to including field faculty as participants in the concept mapping study.

**Article 3.** The concept mapping study resulted in the creation of a conceptual map illustrating the framework of social work education faculty and field instructor's conceptualization of the construct to engage diversity and difference. This study highlighted the "how and where" of the demonstration of the construct which strongly points to application in curriculum and teaching methods. The study also explored the relative importance of each of the conceptual statements and clusters, how difficult each element is to assess, and whether or not faculty and field instructors actively assess each element. The findings reveal differences in faculty with liaison responsibilities, faculty without liaison responsibilities, and field instructors. One important finding is that faculty with liaison responsibilities rate the criteria more similar to field instructors than to faculty without liaison responsibilities. Like the second article, the clustering of themes in this study indicate the importance of a contextual dimension by firmly situating elements in the field practicum, classroom, community, and/or institution as indicated by the cluster labels. Also, like the first study, this study identified discourse, assignments related to diverse identities and populations, and role-playing as ways that students

demonstrate engaging diversity and difference in practice. The elements and themes generated in this study are congruent with the important features participants generated in the first study, namely that the curriculum should address exposure, practice, and awareness. However, this study also identified specific kinds of knowledge acquisition essential to the construct.

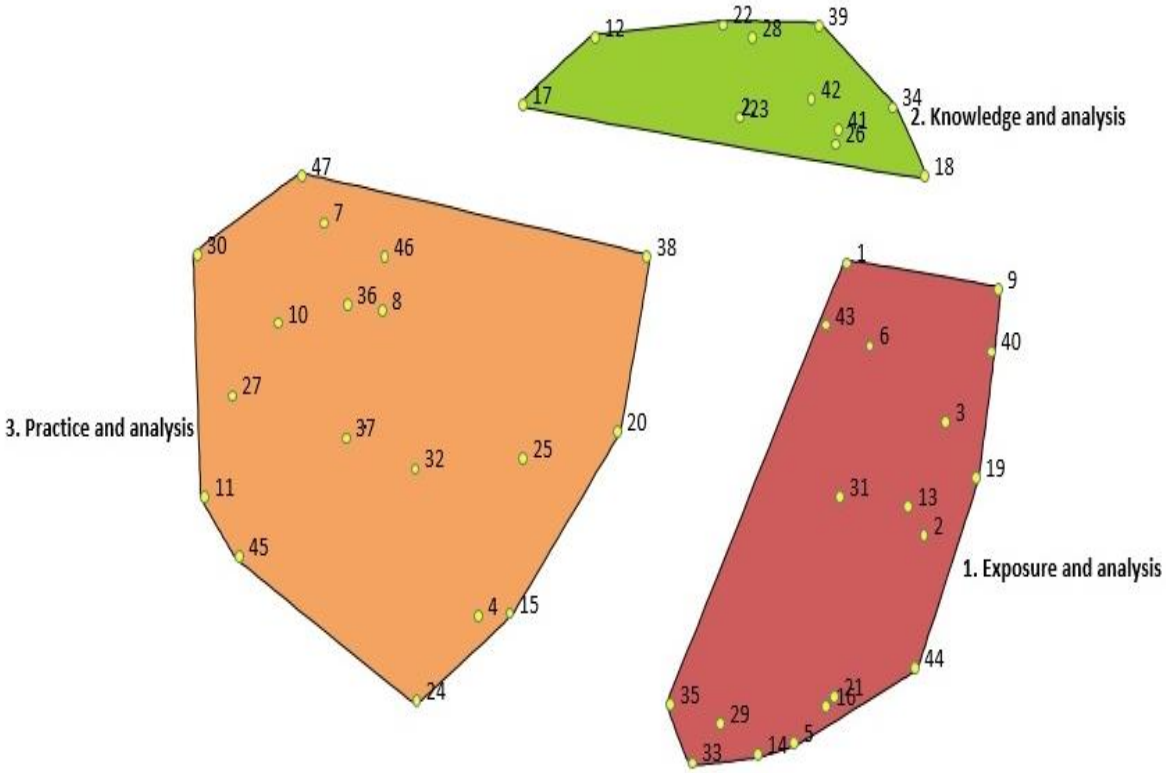
**Linkages Between Articles**

By describing a logic model for a social justice course informed by CRT, the first article, sets the stage for the last two articles. That article establishes a practical and theoretical grounding for a course that teaches students to engage diversity and difference in practice. While this first article constructs a theoretically sound vehicle for teaching the construct, it lacks tools that would enhance evaluation and assessment. The research reported in articles two and three work to meet that challenge.

When findings from the first study and the ten cluster concept map which emerged from the second study are analyzed for connecting and shared themes, a synthesized framework emerges. Building from themes that emerged from the first article: (1) exposure, (2) practice, and (3) knowledge further analysis was conducted using concept mapping software to examine whether a three cluster solution of the 47 statements revealed a congruent framework. The statements and diagram were conceptually consistent with the themes from the qualitative study. This cluster map was computer generated with no manual changes and consequently honors the participants' conceptualization and the statistical multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster

analysis. This cluster map is illustrated in figure 13. The list of statements by cluster is found in Supplemental Data F.

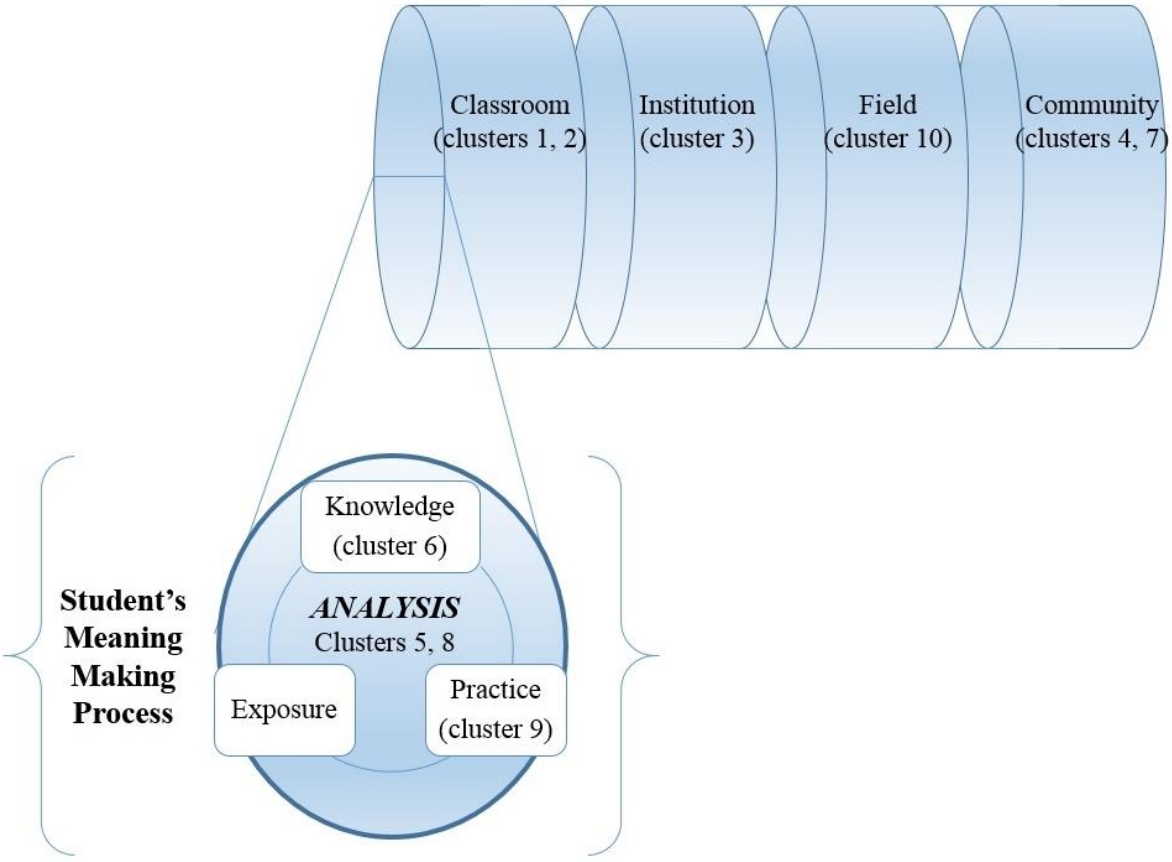
**Figure 13: Three Cluster Map**.




This process and the congruence of this cluster map indicate that the first study provided a more general, higher level, qualitatively rich, conceptualization while the second study provided a more detailed contextually specific conceptualization of the same construct. The second study validated the more general conceptualization from the first study. Conceptually, this more general conceptualization based on both studies might be expressed as the following: (exposure +analysis) + (practice + analysis) + (knowledge + analysis) in each of the primary settings. This conceptualization assumes that analysis includes self-reflection. The first study also reveals the areas where

exposure, practice, knowledge, and analysis are required (attitudes, skills, awareness). The concept mapping study through the cluster organization and the individual statements provides specificity about the contextual settings and specificity about how the competency is demonstrated for assessment purposes. Figure 14 provides an illustration of the how the ten cluster framework from the concept mapping study and the three-theme framework from the qualitative study work together in one framework.

**Figure 14. Combined Framework for Engaging Diversity and Difference in Practice**




The figure illustrates that some clusters are organized primarily contextually by where they occur and include elements of knowledge, exposure and practice with

analysis, while other clusters are organized primarily within one of the domains of knowledge, exposure, and practice with analysis and may occur in one or more of the contextual sites of importance.

**Implications for Social Work Practice and Education**

Combined, the articles have several implications for social work practice and education. The logic model for a social justice course informed by CRT and defining engaging diversity and difference in practice has the potential to inform or provide an alternative to the cultural competence framework application to social work education, which is wrought with criticism. The social justice course as conceptualized has potential to address many of the concerns of critiques about the cultural competence model. The logic model developed in the first article should be implemented and evaluated for effectiveness in meeting the goals described in the model. Additionally, should a course grounded in CRT be successful, strategies and methods from that course might be integrated into other coursework in the social work curriculum.

The specificity of the statements and the cluster map conceptualization generated in the concept mapping study and the qualitative elements from the qualitative study have the potential to inform concrete teaching methods and define outcome measures for engaging diversity and difference in practice. For example, both studies include demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in role-plays. This indicates that including role-play as pedagogy and assessing role-play would be good educational practice. Additionally, the ease of assessment and adequately assessed ratings provide clues to the areas, such as Interacting with and learning from speakers in the classroom

where better assessment tools are needed. With more development, social work programs might use the statements to create mechanisms to document student demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice for evaluation purposes. After additional research to confirm the findings of the studies, the information could be used to inform the development of more detailed and or instructive CSWE standards or guidance to meet the evaluation criteria already in place.

Additionally, the cluster and statements suggest that some elements are more easily assessed in specific sites. By examining these findings, it might be possible to define activities and outcomes for specific sites and how and where an overlap of assessment might take place. Likewise, ease of assessment ratings may be used to determine the most appropriate setting for teaching and assessment. For example, field instructors find it easier to assess Community-based activities, and Institutional engagement than either faculty with liaison responsibilities or faculty without liaison responsibilities. This would indicate that the field instruction site might be the most appropriate setting for assessing these areas. This would also aid in better preparing students for field education because the concept mapping study makes clear differences in assessment related to role. Consequently, a clearer sense of the role of field education related to the construct provides clarity for what should be demonstrated and assessed before field placement to enhance student success.

**Implications for future research.** This dissertation has numerous implications for future research. It would be beneficial to replicate both studies with larger and more diverse samples. Samples that include faculty, field instructors, and students would

encompass a diversity of roles and functions that cover the system of social work education defined by Anastas (2010). In addition to validating this study, future studies could further clarify the most appropriate settings for students to acquire and demonstrate the construct and for faculty and field instructors to assess students' demonstration of the construct. Also larger and more diverse samples would create an opportunity to analyze the impact of a greater number of participant descriptors including race/ethnicity, institutional auspice, size or Carnegie classification of the institution of affiliation, and differences by program level.

Both studies conducted for this dissertation narrowly limited the description of engaging diversity and difference in practice to individuals. Research which broadened the scope of the inquiry to include conceptualization of engaging diversity and difference in practice with families, groups and communities is important to meeting the full range of outcomes required for students. Also, research to compare the conceptual framework presented in article 3 to conceptualizations of cultural competency with specific attention to NASW's conceptualization might provide insight into what might be missing from any of the conceptualizations. Additionally, given the perceived importance of the meaning making process described in article two, another area of potential research is to explore the indicators of positive outcomes from this process and which teaching methods and curriculum features impact the individual processes that students use to make meaning of new ideas, people, and situations as influenced by past experiences, ideas, memories, values.

## Limitations

Completing the dissertation studies revealed many practical difficulties with conceptualizing and conducting research in this subject area. Exploratory and descriptive research typical fall near the beginning of a conceptual line of inquiry (Rubin & Babbie, p. 106). The studies conducted for this dissertation reflect the problem of lack of representativeness common to these types of studies. Difficulties included recruiting samples large enough and diverse enough to meet the goals of the study and to provide a greater level of transferability. Also, the scope of the two studies for this dissertation represent opposite ends of the spectrum. One had a rather homogeneous sample related to location and setting which creates concern about representativeness and focused on just one of the social work education system actors, but yielded a rich phenomenological exploration. The other had a more diverse sample and focused on multiple categories of actors in two contextual sites and multiple locations. This resulted in limited qualitative depth and the inability to make quantitative assumptions about some types of difference.

**Strengths.** There are also some important strengths of these studies. This dissertation builds upon the literature about student outcomes, cultural competence, and social work education systems and addresses gaps in this literature. Student demonstration of engaging diversity and difference in practice is important to social work. The exploration of this construct is timely in that it has had little exploration since the advent of EPAS 2008. Another strength is that the components of this dissertation are conceptually congruent and connected and each serves to both support and build upon the

findings of the others. Each component is grounded in theory and well supported by the literature.

Despite the obstacles to conducting research at this stage of inquiry, the research methods were sound and rigorous. The methods were determined by the stage of inquiry and the outcomes desired. Rigorous adherence to procedures and steps for each method ensured close compliance with each method. Data were analyzed through procedures recommended for each method and checked multiple times for accuracy and interpretation. Overall, this dissertation represents work that both stands on the foundation of previous work of others and moves the inquiry forward.

**Summary**

This dissertation represents a promising step toward enhancing social work education research. Given the expansive impact of social work education on students, clients, client serving systems, and social and organizational policy, it is vital that social work education prepares students to engage in effective social work practice with diverse persons. Additionally, the social work profession's responsibility for quality assurance and accountability to students and communities requires social work education systems to prepare students effectively and efficiently. This requires more research that answers Bogo's (2010) call for social work education research that stretches our understanding of important conceptual issues. The studies and conceptual article forming this dissertation explore a fundamentally important and relatively unexplored area of student competency.

The process of this dissertation offered an opportunity to identify gaps in the social work literature and advance the knowledge of social work education about a core

competency of fundamental importance to the field. It also provided an opportunity to conduct exploratory research that can serve as a baseline for what is likely to be a rich trajectory of associated research.

Jani, Ortiz, Pierce, and Sowbel's (2011) assertion that changes to EPAS over the years "inevitably and unintentionally made it subject to different interpretations and have created an understandable level of confusion among social work educators (p. 298)" establishes a need for more clarity. Given this need, coupled with the importance of training students to engage diversity and difference in practice, it behooves the profession to have a clear understanding of the essential elements of the construct, knowledge of the methods of student demonstration of the construct, curriculum design and teaching methods which enhance student acquisition of the construct, and practical tools for assessment and evaluation

## Supplemental Data: F

## Three Cluster Solution Themes

Cluster Statement

1. Exposure and analysis
    1. Performance on specific assignments regarding diverse populations
    2. Reflecting upon diversity issues encountered through previous life experiences
    3. Discussing diversity issues encountered through experiences in class
    5. Attending a social work program with language diversity
    6. Participating in role-play analysis
    9. Demonstrating appropriate interaction as demonstrated in class discussions
    13. Discussing diversity issues encountered through previous life experiences
    14. Attending a Social Work Program with racially diverse students
    16. Engaging with diverse friends
    19. Working in diverse groups in class
    21. Engaging with diverse neighbors
    29. Engaging with diverse persons among the faculty
    31. Reflecting upon diversity issues experienced in class
    33. Attending a social work program in a city/town with diverse populations
    35. Engaging with diverse persons among the staff
    40. Interacting with and learning from speakers in the classroom
    43. Utilizing media
    44.Engaging with diverse persons among their classmates
2. Knowledge and analysis
    12. Critically assessing research to guide their practice
    17. Engaging in analysis of case conceptualizations
    18. Demonstrating population specific knowledge in class
    22. Reading and analyzing literature and readings
    23. learning about assessments that considers culture
    26. Gaining knowledge of racial identities
    28. Consuming research
    34. Researching diverse populations
    39. Exploration of issues in the literature
    41. Learning about cultural competence
    42. Learning how to be culturally competent in all stages of research
3. Practice and analysis
    4. Engaging in experiential learning of cultural competent practice
    7. Demonstrating population specific knowledge in their field practicum
    8. Demonstrating appropriate interactions as reflected in their journal writing

10. Assessing the cultural competency of their practicum agencies
11. Personal reflection about use of self
15. Engaging with diverse clients
20. Demonstrating awareness of the effect that their own racial identity has on their awareness of diversity issues
24. Engagement in community based activities
25. Discussing diversity issues in class that are encountered in practicum activities
27. Reflecting on similarities and differences in their practicum agencies
30. Adherence to social work values and ethics in their field practicum
32. Engaging in discussions about their field practicums
36. Demonstrating appropriate interaction as reflected in their process recordings
37. Reflecting on diversity issues encountered in practicum activities
38. Adherence to social work values and ethics in the classroom
45. Personal reflection about identity position
46. Identifying diversity in their practicum agencies
47. Making recommendations to improve competency in their practicum agencies

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